

BREAUX ACT
Coastal Wetlands Planning, Protection and Restoration Act

TASK FORCE MEETING
24 January 2013

Minutes

I. INTRODUCTION

Colonel Edward Fleming convened the 83rd meeting of the Louisiana Coastal Wetlands Conservation and Restoration Task Force. The meeting began at 9:40 a.m. on January 24, 2013, at the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in New Orleans, LA. 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. Listed below are the six Task Force Members who were present.

Colonel Edward Fleming, Chairman, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE)
Mr. William Honker, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
Mr. Jeffrey Weller, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)
Mr. Garret Graves, State of Louisiana, Governor's Office of Coastal Activities (GOCA)
Mr. Christopher Doley, National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS)
Mr. Kevin Norton, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)

III. OPENING REMARKS

Colonel Fleming introduced himself, welcomed everyone, and asked the members of the Task Force to introduce themselves.

Colonel Fleming asked if the Task Force had any opening comments or changes to the agenda.

Mr. Honker introduced Sandra McDonald with the EPA Dallas Office, who was attending the Task Force Meeting.

Colonel Fleming presented a certificate of appreciation to Dr. Jenneke Visser, outgoing chairman of the Academic Work Group, who has been with the CWPPRA Program for 14 years. Colonel Fleming thanked Dr. Visser for her hard work with the CWPPRA Program. Dr. Visser introduced Dr. Charles Sasser as her replacement as the Academic Work Group Chairman.

Colonel Fleming explained that the public would be given the opportunity to comment on agenda items and that each commenter should provide their name and affiliation so that their comments could be included in the official record.

Mr. Honker made a motion to accept the agenda as written. Mr. Norton seconded. The motion was passed by the Task Force.

IV. ADOPTION OF MINUTES FROM OCTOBER 11, 2012 TASK FORCE MEETING

Colonel Fleming asked the Task Force members if they had any comments on the minutes from the October 11, 2012 Task Force Meeting. There were no comments.

Mr. Honker made a motion to adopt the October 11, 2012 Task Force meeting minutes. Mr. Norton seconded. The motion was passed by the Task Force.

V. TASK FORCE DECISIONS

A. Agenda Item #6 – Decision: Request for Approval to Initiate De-authorization on Six Projects

Mr. Bren Haase, Louisiana Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority (CPRA), explained CPRA's request for de-authorization for six projects. The Master Plan recognizes that the State is resource-limited, and by de-authorizing projects that are not moving forward, CWPPRA can focus on those projects that are most likely to be successful. The projects being considered for de-authorization, with the reasons for de-authorization, are as follows:

Freshwater Bayou Bank Stabilization (TV-11b), PPL 9, USACE

This project has been nominated for Phase II funding several times and has not received funding. The benefit cost ratio is not favorable and the shoreline erosion rate in the area has decreased.

Delta Building Diversion North of Fort St. Philip (BS-10), PPL 10, USACE

This project has policy issues and is not in a high need area. Since it was first authorized, the cost has risen significantly while the benefits have not increased.

Avoca Island Diversion and Land Building (TE-49), PPL 12, USACE

The scope of this project has changed significantly since it was first authorized. Geotechnical analysis indicates that the marsh containment dikes would need to be very high, which is both costly and difficult to construct.

Spanish Pass Diversion (MR-14), PPL 13, USACE

The benefits of this project have been reduced by half since it was initially authorized, and the costs have increased due to shoaling concerns. Therefore the cost benefit ratio is no longer favorable.

White Ditch Resurrection (BS-12), PPL 14, NRCS

The primary obstacle to this project is landowner demands, mostly regarding hyacinth control and syphon operation.

Bohemia Mississippi River Reintroduction (BS-15), PPL 17, EPA

The planned feature of this project has occurred naturally at Mardi Gras Pass.

Mr. Brad Inman, USACE, reported that the Technical Committee recommends initiating de-authorization procedures for these six projects.

Colonel Fleming opened the floor to comments from the Task Force. There were no comments from the Task Force.

Colonel Fleming opened the floor to comments from the public.

Mr. P.J. Hahn, Plaquemines Parish Government, stated that Plaquemines Parish disagrees with the decision to de-authorize Spanish Pass. The Parish is going to do this work on their own if CWPPRA will not build it. He does not understand the shoaling issues that CWPPRA thinks will be associated with this project. The Parish believes there are a lot of benefits that can occur in this area, particularly with the planned ridge restoration in the area, so the Parish is going to move forward.

Mr. W.P. Edwards, III, Vermilion Corporation, stated that for Project TV-11b (Freshwater Bank Stabilization), CWPPRA has spent \$1.9M on Engineering and Design (E&D) on this project. He asked whether the plans for this project and the other projects that are being de-authorized are going to be retained, as has been requested by the public, so that at a future point in time the details of those plans might be accessed by another agency. Colonel Fleming responded affirmatively. CWPPRA is not discarding any plans. They will all be kept on file with the Federal sponsor and/or the State, who will provide them to any other agency that requests them.

Mr. Edwards then asked if anything would distinguish these de-authorized projects from projects that were de-authorized because they failed. Colonel Fleming responded that CWPPRA does not differentiate why a project is de-authorized, and they de-authorize projects for multiple reasons. Mr. Edwards stated that in the past, when a project was de-authorized, it was because it was a failed project. These projects are being de-authorized because of cost-share issues, not because they are bad projects. The land loss rates in the area that would be protected by TV-11b are incredible. There is a tremendous amount of water exchange that did not occur before the channel was there. Man created this problem, and man designed a solution, and CWPPRA is putting it aside.

Colonel Fleming reminded Mr. Edwards that this is just the initial vote and de-authorization is a six month process. Mr. Inman said that CWPPRA will send letters to Congress and there will be another chance to comment. If the comments are received in a timely manner, the final vote for these de-authorizations could be in June 2013. Colonel Fleming also noted that TV-11b is a Project Priority List (PPL) 9 project, and it has been nominated for Phase II funding

multiple times, including in years before the cost sharing became an issue. It has not been funded. The Task Force acknowledges Mr. Edwards' comments, and he will have more opportunities to comment before the process is complete.

Mr. Edwards asked the State whether parishes could provide the State's 15% cost share for projects on which the State does not want to cost share. Mr. Graves responded negatively. He stated that there are a lot of really good projects, and if they do not get sufficient votes to proceed, it is not because they are bad projects. Other projects are just higher priorities. The State has worked with the USACE to transfer projects to other agencies so that those projects could continue. With the TV-11b project, the costs have increased and the benefits have decreased. Compared to other projects, it is just not the highest priority. At some point, CWPPRA needs to cut its losses and stop spending time, effort, and money on a project that will not be built. The Master Plan is designed to prioritize the State's investments, although the parishes and private landowners can continue to work on projects that are important to them.

Mr. Edwards stated that he thought that shoreline stabilization along Freshwater Bayou was in the Master Plan, but he understands that it is being de-authorized.

Mr. Honker made a motion to initiate de-authorization on these six projects. Mr. Doley seconded. The motion was passed by the Task Force.

B. Agenda Item #11 – Report/Decision: Funding Request for the Non-Rock Alternatives to Shoreline Protection Demonstration Project

Mr. Britt Paul, NRCS, reported that NRCS and CPRA sent out a request for proposals for non-rock alternatives to shoreline protection and received 17 proposals. The project team narrowed these proposals to five that could be tested at three different sites. The proposed alternatives and sites were submitted to the Technical Committee. The Technical Committee recommends building four alternatives at one site with a project cost increase of \$4,202,462.

Colonel Fleming opened the floor to comments from the Task Force. There were no comments from the Task Force.

Colonel Fleming opened the floor to comments from the public.

Dr. Visser stated that at the Technical Committee meeting, she made a statement that testing demonstrations at only one site is a mistake because multiple sites are needed to statistically be able to apply the methods across the coast. She strongly suggests that the demonstrations be tested at multiple sites, despite the increase in costs.

Mr. Inman reported that the Technical Committee discussed this extensively, and the reason they decided to recommend only one site is cost. They felt that the one site that they have chosen has the worst conditions, so if the demonstrations work in the harshest conditions, then perhaps they would work elsewhere.

Colonel Fleming stated that if the Task Force accepts the Technical Committee's recommendation, they need to acknowledge that the demonstrations were only conducted at one site and may not be applicable at other sites.

Mr. Norton stated that he did not think the current decision would preclude testing these alternatives in another location in the future. If certain alternatives do seem to be working in the one site, the Task Force could make a decision to test it in other sites in the future.

Mr. Norton made a motion approve the Technical Committee recommendation to approve \$4,202,462 for the Non-Rock Alternatives to Shoreline Protection Demonstration Project. Mr. Honker seconded. The motion was passed by the Task Force.

C. Agenda Item #12 – Decision: Request for Operation and Maintenance (O&M) Incremental Funding and Budget Increases

Mr. Quin Kinler, NRCS, gave an overview of the ME-04 Project. The project area is approximately 37,000 acres, but the structures are focused on the bankline. The estimate of shoreline erosion was 12.5 feet per year before the project was built. The project was funded on PPL 2 and construction was completed in 1995. Maintenance events occurred in 2002 and 2005. The project used rock removed from Wax Lake Outlet, so there were a variety of rock sizes used, some of which were too small, which contributed to the initial deterioration of the dike. The total project is about 28,000 linear feet of rock protection. CPRA is currently preparing to develop design surveys and complete plans and specifications for this maintenance event if it is funded. The actual maintenance event would occur next year. The total estimated cost is \$2.4 million. The project is in Year 17 of its project life. Including this maintenance event, the total funding request for the project through Year 20 is \$2.5 million. The project has remaining funds of \$36,000 in its budget. The project is very cost effective, and has reduced the erosion rate dramatically, although some erosion continues to occur. Erosion rates increase when the rock has receded to below design level. Where the rock is maintained, erosion is halted. Through 2012, this project has saved 95 acres of land, and through the project life, it is projected to save 112 acres. The cost effectiveness per acre is \$54,000/acre through the project life including this latest maintenance event. This compares favorably with other projects that have been approved in recent PPLs with an average cost-effectiveness of \$85,000/acre. NRCS is requesting an O&M increase of \$2.5 million.

Colonel Fleming stated that ME-13 is very similar, and Mr. Kinler concurred.

Colonel Fleming opened the floor to comments from the Task Force.

Mr. Norton stated that this did come forward at the last Task Force meeting, and was tabled until after the 20-year life discussion. These are planned O&M events that need funding. ME-04 is near the end of its project life. The Planning and Evaluation (P&E) Subcommittee is using this project as an example of a project that is suitable for extending the project life in developing the 20-year life procedures. NRCS estimates that this project will require a \$3.6 million maintenance investment, with a maintenance event in Year 27, to get through 40 years of effective project life.

Mr. Honker asked for confirmation that this maintenance event would maintain the project beyond the 20 year life. Mr. Norton responded that NRCS believes that this maintenance event could make this project effective for another six to seven years beyond the 20-year life. They are proposing extending the project life to 40 years total for this project. It has performed well in two hurricanes.

Colonel Fleming reported that this was one of the projects that the agencies reviewed at the 20-year project life workshop, and it was used as an example of a project that would be considered for an extension of project life. It seems that for a small amount of O&M money, CWPPRA will get a lot more than six to seven years. There was some anxiety at the last Task Force meeting about what would happen at Year 20, but the consensus seems to be that this project would be considered for extension.

Mr. Doley asked for confirmation that the Task Force was not considering actually voting to extend the lifespan. They will still have to make a decision at Year 20. Colonel Fleming confirmed this. He stated that the Task Force is accepting some risk that at some point in the next few years they could decide that it fits in another category, but that risk is relatively low.

Mr. Norton stated that based on the time requirements for survey and design, if there was an alternate path for the project, we would not have spent the \$2 million on actual construction and it could be returned to the Program, although we feel that the project has enough merit to continue to an extended life cycle.

Mr. Inman reported that the Technical Committee recommended providing the requested O&M funding.

Colonel Fleming opened the floor to comments from the public. There were no public comments.

Mr. Weller made a motion to approve the Technical Committee recommendation to approve budget increases of \$2,450,664 and \$2,971,354 and FY 15 incremental funding of \$2,450,664 and \$2,971,354 for the Freshwater Bayou Wetland Protection (ME-04) Project and Freshwater Bayou Bank Stabilization (ME-13) Project, respectively. Mr. Norton seconded. The motion was passed by the Task Force.

D. Agenda Item #13 – Report/Decision: 22nd Priority Project List

Mr. Kevin Roy, USFWS, described the PPL 22 process. CWPPRA began with 60-70 nominees across the coast, which they narrowed to ten candidate projects. The Technical Committee recommends approving Phase I funding for the following four projects:

- North Catfish Lake Marsh Creation (NRCS), \$3,216,194
- Terracing & Marsh Creation South of Big Mar (USFWS), \$2,308,599
- Bayou Dupont Sediment Delivery – Marsh Creation 3 (EPA), \$3,415,930
- Cameron Meadows Marsh Creation & Terracing (NMFS), \$3,108,025

Phase I funding for these four projects is \$12,048,748. The Technical Committee also recommended that no demonstration funding be provided this year since some monies would go toward the non-rock alternatives demonstration project.

Colonel Fleming opened the floor to comments from the Task Force. There were no comments from the Task Force.

Colonel Fleming opened the floor to comments from the public. There were no public comments.

Mr. Norton made a motion to approve the recommendation by the Technical Committee to approve the following four projects for Phase I funding totaling \$12,048,748: North Catfish Lake Marsh Creation, Terracing and Marsh Creation South of Big Mar, Bayou Dupont Sediment Delivery, and Cameron Meadows Marsh Creation and Terracing. Mr. Honker seconded. The motion was passed by the Task Force.

E. Agenda Item #14 – Report/Decision: Request for Phase II Authorization and Approval of Phase II Increment 1 Funding

The Technical Committee reviewed project information and took public comments on requests for Phase II approval. Mr. Inman reported that the Technical Committee recommends that the Task Force approve two projects for Phase II funding: Bayou Bonfouca Marsh Creation and Lost Lake Marsh Creation & Hydrologic Restoration. Mr. Roy presented an overview of each of these projects.

Colonel Fleming opened the floor to comments from the Task Force. There were no comments from the Task Force.

Colonel Fleming opened the floor to comments from the public. There were no public comments.

Mr. Weller made a motion to approve the Technical Committee recommendation to approve Phase II Increment 1 funding for the following two projects in the amount of \$57,763,254: Bayou Bonfouca Marsh Creation and Lost Lake Marsh Creation and Hydrologic Restoration. Mr. Norton seconded. The motion was passed by the Task Force.

VI. INFORMATION

A. Agenda Item #3 – Report: Status of Breaux Act Program Funds and Projects

Ms. Susan Mabry, USACE, reported on the current CWPPRA budget. The PPL estimate is consistently higher than the allocations, but as projects are completed and de-authorized, these two numbers get closer.

The total budget as of 2019 is \$2.27 billion, with a total estimated cost of \$2.64 billion. If CWPPRA does not de-authorize projects that are not going to be constructed and return monies to the Program as appropriate, CWPPRA will have a funding shortfall of \$370 million. These estimates do not include anything that is on the Agenda for today's meeting.

The total Federal funds received by the Program from 1992 to 2012 are \$1.2 billion. The total obligations to date are \$1.0139 (the Project summary report lists \$1.081 B in total obligations) billion. Total expenditures to date are \$917.9 million (total expenditures listed on the Project summary report equal \$795.6 M + \$110 M in Planning = \$905.6 M).

The estimated FY 13 funding is \$63 million. There is the potential to have \$20.7 million returned to the Program from de-authorized projects. The total funding available today is \$83.8 million. If the Task Force approves the Technical Committee's recommendations, the total cost will be \$75.7 million and the Program will have a surplus of \$8 million.

Colonel Fleming opened the floor to comments from the Task Force. There were no comments from the Task Force.

Colonel Fleming opened the floor to comments from the public. There were no public comments.

B. Agenda Item #4 – Report: CWPPRA 20-Year Project Life Workshop

Mr. Inman reported on the 20-Year Project Life Workshop held January 23, 2013. The Technical Committee, Task Force, and the P&E Subcommittee met at the Big Branch Marsh National Wildlife Refuge in Lacombe, LA, to discuss the plan for when projects meet their 20-year project life. The P&E Subcommittee was tasked with determining a process for deciding what happens with each project at Year 15.

At the workshop, the agencies also reviewed Program funding through 2019, which is the current authorization term. They made the assumption that the Program will be reauthorized. They reviewed operations, maintenance, and monitoring cost increases, and determined that these increases have averaged about 10%, which is not unreasonable considering the budget increases for the CRMS Program and West Bay.

The agencies also discussed what may need to occur in the Program in the future to avoid reoccurring problems as projects reach their 20-year life.

The P&E Subcommittee has recommended four basic options: extending the project life, closing out and abandoning the project, transferring O&M responsibilities to another agency or entity, or closing out and removing project features. The P&E Subcommittee was tasked to develop standard criteria for each option with a flow chart to aid this process. The flow chart will ask basic questions, such as has the project been successful, and the answers to the questions will determine which path that project follows. The first two projects, Bayou LaBranche Wetland Creation and Cameron Prairie Wildlife Refuge, reach their 20-year lives in 2014. As the P&E Subcommittee develops the criteria, they will take specific projects and put them

through the criteria to make sure it works. They will begin this process for each project at Year 15.

Colonel Fleming opened the floor to comments from the Task Force.

Mr. Honker stated that they made a lot of progress at the 20-year project life workshop, but there is still a lot of work still to be done. The Task Force needs to determine how much future O&M costs should be considered at the beginning of the project. They need to determine how to make projects sustainable for the long term, and who is going to sustain these projects 20 to 50 years from now. Colonel Fleming agreed that the Task Force needs to start considering O&M costs at Year 2 instead of Year 15.

Mr. Graves thanked Mr. Inman for the update. He wanted to ensure that everyone is thinking about this issue holistically. He wondered about the parameters that should be evaluated. Obviously there are projects that need to be handled immediately, but they also need to look at prospective projects, and decide whether 20 years is appropriate for every project. They should also consider the fact that hard structures increase liability at the project planning stage. He was not suggesting that there should be no hard structures in CWPPRA, but they should also look at other O&M partners, such as Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), parishes, and landowners. They may have a diversion that keeps working and they should continue to maintain, but other types of projects could be basically abandoned shortly after construction with light monitoring. He does not want to present the same challenges to their CWPPRA successors in the future.

Colonel Fleming noted that another topic of discussion at the 20-year workshop was that the current project budgets do not have a line item for closeout activities. The Task Force has decided to add this item going forward. There will always be some activities that will occur, even if they are as minimal as a survey or a final report, and the budget should reflect this reality.

Colonel Fleming opened the floor to comments from the public. There were no public comments.

C. Agenda Item #5 – Report: 2012 State Master Plan Consistency and the CWPPRA Program

Mr. Haase stated that everyone is aware of the significant accomplishment of the 2012 State Master Plan. It is the largest and most ambitious ecosystem restoration plan in the Nation. The Master Plan recognizes the realities of resource limitation. The Master Plan was unanimously approved by the Louisiana Legislature in May 2012. Governor Jindal issued an executive order mandating that State agencies conduct their business in a manner consistent with the Master Plan. In June 2012, the Task Force gave its support to the Master Plan, saying that the CWPPRA PPL process would be consistent with it. The State has determined that “consistent” means that the project is in the same area, of the same type, and has the same borrow source as a project identified in the Master Plan. However, the State recognizes that they were not able to model every possibility in the Master Plan, so changes could be approved if the State is able to consider them in a thoughtful manner. The State has met with all of the Federal

agencies to discuss projects for the upcoming Regional Planning Team (RPT) meetings. Some projects have been considered consistent and some have not. The process of making this determination is time consuming because it must be a thoughtful process. The State appreciates the work of all the Federal agency staffs, and they have had healthy discussions about proposed projects. They have also spoken with a number of landowners, stakeholders, and members of the public. The State will have representatives at the RPT meetings, and there will probably be difficult decisions made at these meetings. One of the strong points of the Master Plan is that it focuses on specific actions to protect citizens and restore the ecosystem. Mr. Haase encouraged the audience to seek out him, Chris Allen, or Stuart Brown if they have any questions.

Colonel Fleming thanked Mr. Haase for the update. The Master Plan is a well thought out, well developed plan. They must try to balance consistency with the Master Plan with the beauty of the CWPPRA Program, which is that it is a bottom-up process. There will be some natural tension when a local agency is advocating for a project that is not in the Master Plan, and they will have to work their way through this process. Mr. Haase agreed with Colonel Fleming.

Colonel Fleming opened the floor to comments from the Task Force.

Mr. Weller reported that the USFWS is supportive of the Master Plan, and asked how possible changes to the Plan would be resolved. Mr. Haase clarified that he was not talking about deviations from the Plan. However, there are instances where specific conditions may preclude construction of a project in the exact footprint or configuration that was indicated in the Master Plan, but a similar project may serve the same purpose. On a larger scale, CPRA is mandated by the legislature to update the Master Plan every five years. Many good projects that are not included in the Master Plan may be included in the future as they learn and practice adaptive management. Mr. Weller asked how modifications were addressed and when is our opportunity to present a project that may be different from one listed in the Master Plan. There is no formalized process to request deviations from the Master Plan, but the State has a team that is working with all of the Federal agencies and changes can occur through the normal interaction of working together.

Mr. Graves noted that the Master Plan process included participation from a number of different Federal agencies and experts with national and international expertise. The State expects that as they learn more, they will design and produce smarter, more efficient projects. There is a formal amendment process under State law that CPRA can present to the legislature for large changes, but the Master Plan does allow for small modifications and improvements in design. The intent is that the State would like to work with property owners, parishes, and other agencies to see how everyone can work together to achieve a goal during the planning stage of a project rather than having problems later in project development. If anyone has a question about consistency with the Master Plan, Mr. Graves encouraged them to work with the State from the beginning of the project development.

Mr. Norton noted that NRCS has met with the State and found the process to be very practical and effective, not only for current priorities, but also for shaping what revisions or amendments might be needed in the future. He noted his appreciation of the CPRA staff for working together with NRCS.

Colonel Fleming opened the floor to comments from the public.

Mr. Randy Moertle, McIhenney Corporation representative, noted that marsh creation is a big component of the State Master Plan. However, the Master Plan frequently recommends borrow sites in the Gulf of Mexico, which is very expensive. He asked Mr. Graves what kind of marsh creation could be nominated if the Gulf borrow sites increase the costs and decrease the number of acres that can be built. Past projects were able to use internal borrow sources.

Mr. Graves responded that the Master Plan studied the freshwater and sediment resources of the State, in rivers and offshore, and tried to prioritize those resources to protect as many people as possible at a reasonable cost. One challenge in using internal borrow sources is the possibility of exacerbating erosion at the borrow site by changing the slope and causing additional problems. Before using an internal borrow source, a determination must be made whether using that source will be detrimental to the borrow site. This analysis must be conducted on a case by case basis.

Mr. Moertle stated that a marsh creation project was constructed in Lafourche Parish that used an interior borrow source, with the borrow site far enough out in the lake that it would not cause problems, and this is a great, successful project. Mr. Moertle agreed that Mr. Graves' position is reasonable, but he wants to build the most effective projects that the Program can afford. The local stakeholders want to nominate good projects that will be accepted by CWPPRA and the State, and he is happy as long as good projects will be seriously examined.

Mr. Graves stated that modeling may be able to be used to determine that there are no adverse impacts at borrow sources, but this depends on the size of the project. There is flexibility within the Master Plan.

Mr. Moertle stated that he thinks that the \$50 billion cost of the Master Plan may be unrealistic. Mr. Graves noted that the cost is \$50 billion over 50 years, and based on money (\$18 B) that the State has received over the past five years, he does think that it is realistic.

Mr. Edwards asked about hydrologic restoration features in the Master Plan at Pecan Island. He asked what components would be considered hydrologic restoration because he does not want to propose a project that will not be accepted because it is not hydrologic restoration. Colonel Fleming replied that the most important metric will be the amount of benefits accrued. He said that he would not be so concerned about whether or not it is hydrologic restoration. Mr. Graves agreed that as long as the benefits accrue in that general category, it will be analyzed.

D. Agenda Item #7 – Report: Final 2012 Report to Congress

Ms. Karen McCormick reported on the 2012 Report to Congress. The Task Force should sign the Report and send it to Congress next week, after which it will be posted on the website for everyone to see. Ms. McCormick thanked everyone who worked on the Report.

Colonel Fleming confirmed that he has the Report for one last read-through, and the USACE will compose a transmittal letter and send it to Congress in the next two weeks.

Colonel Fleming opened the floor to comments from the Task Force. There were no comments from the Task Force.

Colonel Fleming opened the floor to comments from the public. There were no public comments.

E. Agenda Item #8 – Report: Outreach Committee Quarterly Report

Ms. Susan Testroet-Bergeron, CWPPRA Outreach, reported on the activities of the CWPPRA Outreach Committee. They have conducted several informal and formal education events. They worked with Louisiana Sea Grant on the Ocean Commotion event, and sponsored an activity called “Touch the Wetlands.” They brought *Turning the Tide* education materials to the joint Louisiana Science Teachers Association and Louisiana Association of Teachers of Mathematics Conference, and it was very well received. They gave a presentation at the Restore America’s Estuary Conference in Tampa, FL. CWPPRA Outreach has also conducted its first trial with Twitter. They attended the La Fete D’Ecologie Conference in Morgan City. Louisiana Public Broadcasting is buying ads for CWPPRA. Mr. Andre Lyon is working on an independent documentary, and he videotaped the entire December Technical Committee Meeting. He is very excited about what CWPPRA is doing for the Louisiana coast. CWPPRA is working with the Louisiana Environmental Education Association to get teachers into the wetlands so that they can teach their students about the importance of the coast. Ms. Bergeron also thanked WYES for working on a short film on the Bayou Dupont Project.

Upcoming events include the RPT meetings next week, the CNREP Conference (economics conference), Earth Fest, and Baton Rouge Earth Day. Also, on March 13, 2013, CWPPRA Outreach will present “*I Remember...*” *An Art Show of Environmental Significance*, which will showcase environmental portraits and oral histories of ten Louisiana stakeholders. Lieutenant Governor Jay Dardenne will be the speaker for that event. They will send more information in the CWPPRA Newsflash in February.

Ms. Bergeron showed a short film that highlighted the Urban Waters program and showed students at St. Benedict the Moor School learning about wetlands around New Orleans.

Colonel Fleming opened the floor to comments from the Task Force.

Colonel Fleming thanked Ms. Bergeron. Mr. Honker thanked Ms. Bergeron and Dr. Phil Turnipseed, who has been championing the effort to bring CWPPRA and the Urban Waters Federal Partnership together. New Orleans is one of the pilot cities for the Urban Waters program, and Mr. Danny Wiegand was recently hired to lead the project.

Colonel Fleming opened the floor to comments from the public.

Mr. Mark Schleifstein, Nola.com/Times Picayune, suggested that CWPPRA has an opportunity to attend the annual Society for Environmental Journalists conferences in the fall to highlight CWPPRA activities and explain the Restore Act to the public. Each of the CWPPRA agencies has a booth at that conference, and he urged CWPPRA to participate as well.

Ms. Drue Dumas, principal of St. Benedict the Moor School, thanked Ms. Bergeron for including their students in the video that she showed. St. Benedict is a very small school. They do service learning projects throughout the year, and the CWPPRA project was one of the best projects that they have participated in because it exposes the children to areas outside the urban environment.

Colonel Fleming thanked Ms. Dumas for letting CWPPRA work with the school, adding that the video was wonderful and it serves as a great example for other schools.

F. Agenda Item #9 – Report: Coast-wide Reference Monitoring System (CRMS) Report

Ms. Dona Weifenbach, CPRA, reported on CRMS milestones since the last Task Force Meeting. The Report to Congress is complete. CRMS did 13 OM&M reports for 2012 and have 12 planned for 2013. PPL 22 Wetland Value Assessments are using CRMS data. They attended the Restore America's Estuaries Conference in October. Ms. Weifenbach and Ms. Bergeron have discussed producing a document that can be handed out at conferences to explain CRMS.

Coast-wide aerial photography was flown in October and November and will be available in mid-April to USGS for their land/water analysis. The annual Road Shows with the Federal partners are scheduled for early spring. USGS will present the latest website updates and will get comments from the Federal partners.

Ms. Weifenbach made a presentation on CRMS users data use. CRMS users are not just Federal sponsors and State project managers. Stakeholders, landowners, and members of the public who present projects at the RPT meetings all use the CRMS website to identify areas in need of restoration, to propose new projects, to evaluate current projects, and to practice adaptive management to ensure that projects are effective. The CRMS website can be used to see if an area has lost land over time, by quantifying acreage at sites over time. Many sites have historic aerial photography. CRMS data can be used to provide data to operate water control structures by tracking salinity and water levels to ensure the project is meeting its targets. CRMS also measures vegetation change, so website users can see if a marsh has changed from an intermediate marsh to a saltwater marsh. The CRMS website also includes a link to the 2012 State Master Plan, so the public can see Master Plan-approved projects.

CRMS can also be used to determine if CWPPRA project goals have been met over time. A monitoring report is written every three years for every constructed project to determine if the project is meeting its goals. The monitoring report makes recommendations if the project is not meeting its goals. In between the reports, members of the public can go to the CRMS website to see if there is more recent data available. Project managers can use CRMS data to change the management of a project that is not meeting its goals or change features or operations to make a project more successful.

CRMS can also identify damages to projects following major disturbances. After a storm event, CRMS contractors check CRMS sites for damages to the site and damages to the marsh. This allows CWPPRA to correctly attribute damages to a storm, normal events, or a project. It is also important to know if CWPPRA project areas are more resilient than the surrounding marshes. CRMS data will be even more important as projects reach the end of their 20-year life.

The CRMS dataset has many uses, and Ms. Weifenbach encouraged the Federal sponsors to attend the USGS Road Shows to make recommendations so that CRMS can continue to make relevant, usable data available. She also encouraged members of the public to attend CRMS trainings so they can learn how to use CRMS data to study the marsh around them.

Colonel Fleming opened the floor to comments from the Task Force.

Mr. Doley thanked Ms. Weifenbach. He asked if the infusion of money in Louisiana would require an evolution of CRMS to meet that adaptive need. Ms. Weifenbach replied that the CRMS design is set with 390 stations, and they cannot add more stations. However, they can add CRMS-like monitoring stations as needed.

Mr. Graves added that, in addition to CRMS giving feedback for project performance, the State is also proceeding in developing a System-Wide Assessment and Monitoring Plan, (SWAMP), to help provide a more holistic picture of what is happening in the project areas. Mr. Doley asked for a more detailed explanation of SWAMP at a future Task Force Meeting.

Colonel Fleming opened the floor to comments from the public. There were no public comments.

G. Agenda Item #10 – Report: Weeks Bay Marsh Creation and Shore Protection/Commercial Canal Freshwater Redirection Project (TV-19)

Mr. O’Neil Malbrough, Shaw, stated that the presentation has not changed since the October Task Force Meeting. The Weeks Bay project was initially a marsh creation project that was designed to create 210 acres of marsh and close a hole in the landbridge between Weeks Bay/Vermilion Bay and the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway (GIWW). There were constructability issues due to existing oil and gas fields. Iberia and Vermilion Parishes decided to use Coastal Impact Assistance Program funding to study alternatives to the project. The current project is approximately the same shape as the original project, but the original project had a cost of \$30 million and did not produce enough acres.

Shaw looked at several alternatives, and ultimately recommended concrete panels and a sediment trapping area that cost approximately \$12 million. They met with CPRA, who is running a model to show whether freshwater will continue west if the Weeks Bay and four other channels along the GIWW are closed. Mr. Malbrough reported that he has not seen the report, but has heard about it. It should be complete soon. Shaw estimates that 75% of the freshwater in the GIWW is leaving the system at Weeks Bay now, and the project would reduce this to 35%. There is an average of 10,000 cubic feet per second (cfs) in the GIWW, and as it travels west the

freshwater decreases. The benefits of this project are not just marsh creation, but also hydrologic features and a freshwater diversion.

Mr. Clark stated that he thought the report was in draft format and that the State was reviewing it. Mr. Malbrough responded affirmatively. Mr. Clark stated that the Task Force also discussed having the Environmental Work Group review the model in April. Mr. Malbrough stated that Shaw's comment at this time is that they thought the model would just study the Weeks Bay closure, but the model that CPRA is using is modeling closing the Boston Canal and several other canals in addition to Weeks Bay. However, Shaw has not seen the model or the results, so they cannot comment further.

Mr. Stuart Brown, CPRA, stated that at the last Task Force meeting, CPRA was tasked to review the potential benefits of this project. It is currently a shoreline protection project. The land loss in the project area is relatively low. CPRA was asked to look at the benefits of moving freshwater further west. A significant amount of freshwater is lost at the Wax Lake Outlet and the Jaws. The GIWW at Cypremort Point has only about 1,300 cfs net mean flow. This is not the Mighty Mississippi, but it is still a decent amount of water. Cypremort Point GIWW is the most western last location where CPRA has GIWW discharge measurements. To estimate the flow further west, CPRA would have to model the flow based on elevations and discharge data. The State is modeling the complete closure of Weeks Bay as well as the four main canals using the MIKE FLOOD model, which is an extension of the Chenier Plain Model, also known as Southwest Coastal. The final report should be available soon. To determine the benefits of a freshwater diversion, the modelers need to have a defined receiving area and a specific amount of water flowing into that area. This is almost impossible to determine for this project. The proposed receiving area is 700,000 acres. But the first question is, can freshwater be moved to the west, and this model should answer that question. The State hopes to have the model completed today and plans to send it to Shaw and the parishes next week.

Mr. Clark asked Mr. Brown if the report could be made available to CWPPRA agencies. Mr. Brown responded affirmatively.

Mr. Malbrough stated that he has two letters from the Port of Iberia and Iberia Levee District supporting this project that he wants to put on the record.

Colonel Fleming opened the floor to comments from the Task Force. There were no further comments from the Task Force.

Colonel Fleming opened the floor to comments from the public.

Mr. Moertle stated that there is a lot of sediment coming through that area, and the canals around Avery Island are being silted in. He has done vegetation planting there, and he had to go down to his shoulder to get to the root system because the sediment is so deep. It is not just fresh water that the GIWW is moving.

Mr. Edwards reiterated that this is a very important project to Vermilion Parish, and he is confident that the model will show freshwater flows to the west. If CWPPRA can model the Davis Pond and Caernarvon diversions, then they should be able to model this.

VII. ADDITIONAL AGENDA ITEMS

There were no additional agenda items.

VIII. REQUEST FOR PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were no public comments.

IX. CLOSING

A. Announcement: Date of Upcoming CWPPRA Program Meeting

Mr. Inman announced that the RPT meetings are January 29 – 31 in Abbeville, Morgan City, and New Orleans.

B. Announcement: Scheduled Dates of Future Program Meetings

FY2013

January 29, 2013	11:00 a.m.	Region IV Planning Team Meeting	Abbeville
January 30, 2013	9:00 a.m.	Region III Planning Team Meeting	Morgan City
January 31, 2013	9:00 a.m.	Region II Planning Team Meeting	New Orleans
January 31, 2013	1:00 p.m.	Region I Planning Team Meeting	New Orleans
April 16, 2013	9:30 a.m.	Technical Committee	New Orleans
June 4, 2013	9:30 a.m.	Task Force	Lafayette
September 11, 2013	9:30 a.m.	Technical Committee	Baton Rouge
October 10, 2013	9:30 a.m.	Task Force	New Orleans
November 13, 2013	7:00 p.m.	PPL 23 Public Comment	Baton Rouge
December 12, 2013	9:30 a.m.	Technical Committee	Baton Rouge

C. Adjournment

Colonel Fleming called for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Honker so moved and Mr. Norton seconded. Colonel Fleming adjourned the meeting at 12:00 p.m.