

Presentation Notes

Louisiana Trustee Implementation Group 2022 Public Meeting for Restoration Plan/Environmental Assessment #8: Wetlands, Coastal, and Nearshore Habitats April 5, 2022

This document is intended to accompany the Louisiana Trustee Implementation Group's presentation slides from their April 5, 2022 Public Meeting webinar.

Slide 1:

Good afternoon everyone and welcome to the Louisiana DWH Trustee's public webinar for our latest Restoration planning effort – RP/EA #8 Restore and Conserve Wetlands, Coastal and Nearshore Habitats. My name is Maury Chatellier with the CPRA in Baton Rouge LA. I'm here today with several of my colleagues from the agency along with staff from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration to present to you details on our recently released restoration plan to offset damages from the 2010 Deepwater Horizon oil spill. This draft plan consists of four preferred alternative projects and two non-preferred alternatives. Of the four projects we are proposing to move forward with, two are new engineering and design starts and two are proposed for construction. And with these proposed projects, we have the opportunity to leverage other funding sources, including the NFWF Gulf Environmental Benefit Fund, monies from the Louisiana CWPPRA program as well as the RESTORE Act. This provides an opportunity to stretch our NRDA funds to enhance restoration opportunities here in the state. We'll discuss these in more detail shortly.

Slide 2:

After the presentation, we will answer as many questions as we can on the restoration plan in the time allotted. Take a look at the 'Questions' box at the bottom of the GoToWebinar control panel (shown on this slide). If you have a question for the Trustees, please type it into this box and we'll try to answer as best we can. So again, thank you for your attendance today. And now, I'll turn the presentation over to Mr. Mel Landry with the NOAA to give you some background information on the NRDA process.

Slide 3:

The things we will be talking about today are all related to the Natural Resource Damage Assessment from the Deepwater Horizon oil spill. I have an overview timeline laid out here that will catch you up on our history to today. The oil spill began in April 2010 and injury assessment started right away. In April 2011, BP agreed to make up to \$1 billion available for restoration even before the injury assessment was complete to get a jump start on restoration, and from 2011 to 2016 we approved a total of 5 restoration plans and 65 projects across the Gulf of Mexico with a combined cost of \$866 million. On April 4, 2016, the federal government and the five Gulf states reached a settlement with BP; it totaled approximately \$20.8 billion. The Programmatic Damage Assessment & Restoration Plan was finalized with the settlement. That plan guides that trustees in the implementation of projects to restore injuries caused by the spill. Of the \$20.8 billion, up to \$8.8 billion (including the \$1 billion in early restoration) will go to natural resource restoration across the Gulf - with \$5 billion for restoration in the Louisiana Restoration Area,

which is managed by the Louisiana Trustee Implementation Group. Since the settlement, we have continued working hard to advance restoration of the Gulf. We have previously released 7 Major Restoration Plans (as well as a number of smaller restoration plans) which have selected or proposed projects that will restore for injuries in Louisiana, ranging from birds to oysters to wetlands and nearshore habitats to restoring for lost recreational opportunities as a result of the oil spill. In January of last year, we began work Draft RP/EA #8 which considers additional Wetlands, Coastal, and Nearshore Habitat restoration projects. The draft plan was released on March 18th of this year and the public comment period is currently open and will close on Monday, April 18th.

Slide 4:

When an incident like an oil spill takes place, laws direct that federal and state Trustees be identified to respond and assess the injuries to natural resources and the public, work on remediation, and eventually take on restoration. Since this is such a huge restoration effort, the largest ever in the U.S., the state and federal Trustees established Trustee Implementation Groups – often referred to as TIGs – to guide the work in the different restoration areas. These provide flexibility and accountability that allow for the differences between restoration areas and Trustees. The Trustees serve on the Trustee Council which among many things, ensures coordination among the TIGs. Today we’re focusing on the work of the Louisiana TIG.

Slide 5:

The Louisiana TIG includes representation from 5 State and 4 Federal Trustees. The Federal Trustees are the Department of Interior represented by Sarah Clardy, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration represented by Mel Landry, the Environmental Protection Agency represented by Doug Jacobson, and the Department of Agriculture, represented by Ron Howard. The State Trustees are the Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority, the Department of Wildlife & Fisheries, the Department of Environmental Quality, the Department of Natural Resources, and the Louisiana Oil Spill Coordinator's Office, all represented by Bren Haase.

Slide 6:

This pie chart shows the allocation of funds between restoration areas. You can see that the Louisiana restoration area will receive the largest allocation - totaling \$5 billion dollars.

Slide 7:

The \$5 Billion in funds for the Louisiana TIG are subdivided into 5 Restoration Categories. As you can see, the vast majority goes toward projects that restore and conserve habitat. Other categories include Monitoring and Adaptive Management, Recreational Use, Living Coastal and Marine Resources, and Water Quality.

Slide 8:

Within the Restore and Conserve Habitat Restoration Category, there is approximately \$4B for Wetlands, Coastal, and Nearshore Habitats. This category is proposed for funding all of the projects we will discuss today. The Raccoon Island Restoration project in Terrebonne Parish and the Orleans East Landbridge Marsh Creation project in Orleans Parish project are proposed for Engineering and Design funding. The Bayou La Loutre Ridge Restoration and Marsh Creation Project in St. Bernard Parish and the Bayou Dularge Ridge and Marsh Restoration project in Terrebonne Parish are both proposed for construction. These four projects total approximately \$74.8M. There are also two projects that were evaluated in the plan that are not proposed for funding at this time. Those projects are Lake Lery Marsh Creation and Rim Restoration, Increment 3 and Bayou Pointe-aux-Chenes Ridge Restoration and Marsh Creation.

Slide 9:

To arrive at the projects that are evaluated in RP8, the trustees start with project submitted by the public through the Trustee Council website and the Louisiana DWH website. Those projects are then screened based on criteria in the OPA, the framework set forth in the PDARP, and the LA TIG's goals for this plan. From that screening, the TIG identified the 6 projects evaluated in RP8 I'll now turn it over to Pat Williams with NOAA to present our first proposed project.

Slide 10:

Hello, everybody, this is Patrick Williams with NOAA fisheries. I'm presenting the Raccoon Island, Barrier Island Restoration projects, and this is an Engineering Design project.

Slide 11:

Raccoon Island is located at the western end of the Isle Dernieres Barrier Islands in Terrebonne Parish. It provides frontline storm protection for Terrebonne Parish and supports unique transitional habitat between the estuarine and marine environments. Raccoon Island is environmentally significant given that it is part of a Refuge managed by the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries and supports valuable fish and bird habitat. It is one of the most valuable nesting habitat for colonial waterbirds and ground nesters and is one of the 10 remaining brown pelican colonies in Louisiana. Additionally, the island is a popular destination for recreational fishing.

Slide 12:

The pictures in these animations illustrate Raccoon Island habitat and birds oiled by the DWH incident.

Slide 13:

Raccoon Island is sediment starved and has high shoreline recession and acreage losses even with various sediment, armoring, and planting activities implemented from 1994 to 2017. The sand spit on the western end of the island detached and submerged and has become a shoal. Closeup west to east view of the island in 2017 with the Gulf breakwaters to the right and back barrier marsh creation to the left All of Raccoon Island is expected to disappear by 2050 without new restoration actions.

Slide 14:

The goal of the proposed Raccoon Island project is to perform engineering and design for a project that, if constructed in the future, would provide multiple benefits to injured resources. General design goals are: restore and create habitat, while supporting geomorphic and ecological function including preventing island breaching. The proposed engineering and design would consider borrow sources offshore and from the downdrift for beach, dune, and back barrier marsh restoration through sediment placement; shoreline protection features such as maintenance of the Gulf breakwaters; construction of bayside breakwaters or a living shoreline; and on-island features such as sand fencing, vegetation planting on the dune and marsh, crushed aggregate for nesting substrate, and hay bales. Conceptually, Raccoon Island would be approximately 325 acres after placement of sand fill for beach, dune, back barrier tidal marsh and mounds and extend the island life by 20 years. If selected, engineering and design will be conducted, and construction could be considered in a subsequent RP/EA. E&D activities are estimated to cost up to \$8.2 million and take approximately three years from award of funding.

Slide 15:

Hi everyone. My name is April Newman and I'm a project manager with CPRA. I'm going to give a brief overview of the East Orleans Landbridge Restoration project.

Slide 16:

The proposed project is in Orleans Parish, and as the name suggests it is located on a strip of land separating two major water bodies, Lake Pontchartrain and Lake Borgne. This land bridge is one of the most critical natural barriers protecting the City of New Orleans. It helps mitigate storm surge in Lake Pontchartrain; without it, the New Orleans levee system would be much more vulnerable to overtopping or breaching.

Slide 17:

The proposed project would create or nourish approximately:
1,563 Acres of Marsh; the project footprint you see in this figure here will be scaled down during preliminary design, which is currently underway. Also proposed is over 21k LF of shoreline protection, with the potential for living shoreline to be evaluated during the final engineering and design process. Preliminary Design is funded through the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation's National Coastal Resiliency Fund for \$1M. So this proposal is for the remaining E&D funds: \$4M, needed to get the project to final design.

Slide 18:

Preliminary design funds are being used to evaluate the broader area and develop a draft layout for marsh creation areas, shoreline protection, and to identify a preferred borrow source. Preliminary design is scheduled to complete by December 2022. If selected for Final E&D, additional finer scale data will be collected to inform the final design, and the team will pursue construction permits and land rights agreements. That phase would be completed by December 2024. So thank you very much, and I will hand it off to the next presenter.

Slide 19:

Thank you, April. Good afternoon, my name is Vida Carver and I am the CPRA project manager for the Bayou La Loutre Ridge Restoration and Marsh Creation Project.

Slide 20:

The Bayou La Loutre Ridge Restoration and Marsh Creation Project is located in the Pontchartrain and Breton Sound Basins, in St. Bernard Parish. The proposed project consists of two distinct components. The marsh creation area is located east of the Mississippi River Gulf Outlet (MRGO) and north of Bayou La Loutre near the MRGO closure. The ridge feature is located along Bayou La Loutre, with features east and west of MRGO. The Bayou La Loutre habitats are an important natural resource, and the ridge is considered vital protective habitat.

Slide 21:

The proposed project, shown in white, will create and restore approximately: 421 Acres of Marsh; 28,855 LF of ridge along Bayou La Loutre. Engineering and Design was funded through CWPPRA. Construction funds requested: \$21.2M. If selected, CPRA plans to combine the marsh creation portion of the Bayou La Loutre project with the Lake Borgne Marsh Creation Project – Increment One (shown in green), which is currently under construction, in order to maximize resources. Both projects share the same borrow area (shown in blue); combining the projects allows construction to progress seamlessly and money will be saved on mobilization. The ridge component of the project will be bid as a separate contract.

Slide 22:

The final design of this proposed project is complete. There are only a few tasks remaining before we can bid this project. Oyster lease assessment and acquisition, landrights, and cultural resources tasks are anticipated to be complete in May of this year. The construction permit was submitted and deemed complete by OCM January 28, 2022. OCM was able to modify the Lake Borgne Marsh Creation Project – Increment One consistency determination to include this project. The permit from the Corps requires the finalized cultural resource investigation, so we anticipate receiving that permit in August. Once construction plans and documents are finalized, the marsh creation component would be ready for construction in early 2023, followed closely by the advertisement for the ridge component.

Slide 23:

My name is Todd Baker. I'm a Project Manager of the Coastal Restoration Protection Authority. I'll be presenting on the Bayou Dularge Ridge and Marsh restoration project, which is proposed for

construction funding under restoration plan number eight.

Slide 24:

If approved, the Bayou Dularge project, which is located in Terrebonne Parish, will be constructed just south of Houma, Louisiana. The project would restore an important land bridge feature between Caillou, also known as Sister Lake. This land bridge is an important salinity barrier and storm surge buffer between the two lakes, and also the wetlands and the communities north of the project area.

Slide 25:

If approved, this project will create between 400-500 acres of wetlands, and an additional 30 acres of marsh nourishment. The project is also designed to restore 17,200- 19,860 linear feet of storage located on the south side of Bayou Dularge. The total project cost is just over \$40 million, which includes funding for final design, construction bonds, future operation, and maintenance, and monitoring as well.

Slide 26:

Now we'll go over the schedule a little bit. The Natural Resources Conservation Service just brought this to 95% design completion this past year, utilizing restore funds. If it's approved in restoration plan number eight, we will move this project forward to construction. Our plan is to have the final design completed by September of this year with a permit submission to the state of Louisiana to the Corps of Engineers by October. We anticipate about a year for that permit to be approved. So, by October of 2023, we would anticipate having a permanent hand. We would advertise for construction a month later, so November. And if everything goes well, we could be under construction by January of 2024.

Slide 27:

The trustees evaluated 3 construction projects, 3 engineering and design projects and a “no action” alternative in RP8. The previously discussed projects are the proposed “preferred alternatives”. The “two non-preferred” alternatives include the Lake Lery construction project and the Pointe aux Chenes engineering and design project. These two “non-preferred” alternatives are not recommended for funding by the LA TIG at this time. We will now go into a little more detail on these projects

Slide 28:

The Lake Lery Project is located in St. Bernard parish. The goal of Lake Lery Marsh Creation and Rim Restoration, Increment 3 is to restore approximately 400 acres of marsh using sediment hydraulically dredged from Lake Lery. The project also proposes to restore approximately 2.38 miles of the Lake Lery Shoreline and build an embankment feature to protect this project against future erosion. The total proposed construction cost is approximately \$19,420,000. Despite being a highly rated project, it is not proposed for funding by the LA TIG at this time because it does not provide as significant benefits as the other two construction projects proposed in this plan.

Slide 29:

The Pointe aux Chenes Ridge Restoration and Marsh Creation project is a proposed engineering and design project located in Terrebonne and Lafourche Parishes. If constructed, this project would restore approximately 473 acres of marsh using sediment hydraulically dredged from either Lake Felicity or Lake Raccourci. This would be decided during the E&D phase. The project would also restore approximately 31,910’ of ridge along Bayou Pointe aux Chenes. The total proposed E&D cost estimate for the Pointe aux Chenes project is approximately \$4,736,900. Despite being a highly rated project, it is not proposed for funding by the LATIG at this time because it does not provide the significant benefits as the other proposed E&D projects in this plan. If you would like more details on these “non-preferred” alternatives, please see the evaluation of alternatives section in the full restoration plan.

Slide 30:

The restoration plan and environmental assessment describing these proposed projects and the considered design alternatives is available for public review and comment now through September 22, 2020. You can download a copy at LA-DWH.com or the NOAA gulf spill restoration website. That site also contains instructions for submitting comments either online or by mail to this address. Please note that today we will not respond to any comments or questions that members of the public submit, but all comments and questions submitted by the public here will be recorded and considered along with any comments received in writing. We appreciate your input.

Slide 31:

Take a look at the ‘Questions’ box at the bottom of the GoToWebinar control panel (shown on this slide). If you have a question for the Trustees, please type it into this box and we will read and answer as many questions as we can in the time allotted, or until there are no more questions. I will now hold for a few moments to allow for your questions to come in. Thank you!

Slide 32:

Thank you Jane. On behalf of the Louisiana Trustee Implementation Group, I want to thank you all for attending this webinar on Restoration Plan #8. We hope that you found the information helpful and informative. We also appreciate your interest in our ongoing efforts to restore for the natural resource damages caused by the historic DWH oil spill. We will continue with our restoration efforts and continue to keep you updated as we make progress. You can find the materials for today's meeting as well as other useful information on our past and ongoing restoration efforts on the web sites listed here. Again, thank you for your attendance and have a wonderful afternoon.

Question and Answer Period:

Q: Excellent Progress since LCA 8 Days. Are the design of these projects being done internally or via RFP/RFQ, Design Build etc.?

A: Thank you for the question. Each project will have a lead implementing Trustee and it will be at their discretion on how the projects will be designed - either internally or via consultant. At this time those decisions haven't been made and are pending the outcome of the RP process.

Q: What kind of support is provided for shrimp, oyster, crab, and fin fish fisheries to maintain business or transition out?

A: The projects being evaluated in this restoration plan aren't anticipated to have significant effects on fisheries. Therefore, this plan does not contain measures for fisheries. However, the projects included in this plan would be anticipated to benefit resources harvested by these fisheries.

Q: How far along is the current E&D for East Orleans Land Bridge?

A: We have begun data collection in the potential marsh creation areas, shoreline protection area, and two potential borrow areas. The goal of the preliminary design phase is to reduce future scope and timeline through a nested approach, so it's a broader stroke data collection effort than we would do for a final design phase.

Q: How long will construction of the Bayou La Loutre project take?

A: There are two components. The ridge restoration will take 10 months and the marsh creation will take 18 months.

Q: If Raccoon Island engineering and design is already 8.2 million dollars, how much would funding the full construction be?

A: The presently estimated construction cost is approximately \$75M. However, the cost will be revised as the features are refined during engineering and design. For example, the cost presently assumes borrow from Ship Shoal whereas we are hopeful for substantial cost savings with a borrow source closer to the island.

Q: Why is there a range of acreages proposed to be built for the Bayou Dularge project?

A: So, the reason for the range of benefits for this project is that we haven't nailed down the final design yet. NRCS completed 95% design, and we need to carry forward to the 100% design. And the two big issues hanging out is we have to claim land ownership on one piece of marsh creation. And also we have a few questions we need to answer on some of the soil qualities taken in the geo tech surveys. Both of those will be answered and final design before we get to construction.