

**MINUTES OF
SOUTHEAST LOUISIANA FLOOD PROTECTION AUTHORITY-EAST
COASTAL COMMITTEE MEETING
HELD ON FEBRUARY 17, 2022**

PRESENT: Eugene J. Joanen, IV, Chair
Roy Arrigo, Committee Member
Mark L. Morgan, Committee Member

The Coastal Committee of the Southeast Louisiana Flood Protection Authority-East (FPA or Authority) met on February 17, 2022, at the New Orleans Lakefront Airport, Terminal Building, Second Floor Conference Room, 6001 Stars and Stripes Boulevard, New Orleans, Louisiana. Mr. Joanen called the meeting to order at 9:04 a.m.

Opening Comments: Mr. Joanen commented that the Committee's discussions would be compressed in order to include all of the information to be provided and that he was happy to see that a number of people were present.

Adoption of Agenda: The Committee adopted the agenda as presented.

Approval of Minutes: The Committee approved the minutes of the Coastal Committee meeting held on January 20, 2022.

Public Comments: None

New Business:

A. Discussion of letter(s) of support.

Mr. Joanen advised that a letter of support was sent by the FPA to Craig Gothreaux, Fish Biologist, Habitat Conservation Division, NOAA, on his initiatives and that a second letter of support was issued to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) for Coastal Wetlands Planning, Protection and Restoration Act (CWPPRA) PPL 32 in New Orleans East. He added that Mr. Gothreaux has been a mainstay on the frontline of support for living shoreline projects.

B. Discussion of Commissioners support for potential coastal initiatives within the Orleans and Lake Borgne Basin Levee Districts.

Mr. Joanen advised that he will create a list of potential coastal initiatives and would earmark and note the merits of the projects for which the FPA should provide full public support. The list will be distributed to the Coastal Committee, the Board and staff. In addition, he will provide letters of support for appropriate projects.

C. Report from Roy Arrigo on Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority meetings.

Mr. Arrigo reported that the Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority (CPRA) discussed the following in its last meeting: restoration in the LaBranche Wetlands, the infrastructure bill passed by Congress which includes \$3.5 billion to mitigate damages from the Mississippi River-Gulf Outlet, restoration in the Bayou Sauvage area, and a ridge habitat restoration project in St. Bernard Parish that is being overseen by the Pontchartrain Conservatory.

D. Report on progress of seeking opportunities at the federal level and discussion of possible meetings with FPA's consultants in Washington, D.C.

Mr. Joanen reported that he met with Kelli Chandler, Regional Director, and Chris Humphreys, Director of Engineering, and had discussions with the FPA's consultants, as well as Richard Duplantier, the Commissioner representing Orleans Parish, and Clay Cosse, the Commissioner representing St. Bernard Parish, regarding funding opportunities. He pointed out that Jefferson Parish is currently seeking funding opportunities. He had also asked Louis Capo, Lakefront Management Authority (LMA) Director, Ms. Chandler and Mr. Humphreys to provide a needs list for potential funding requests. Funding opportunities will be investigated for coastal projects, hurricane protection infrastructure and anything that would benefit the system. He added that he would report back on a path forward.

Mr. Joanen noted that he visited Pontchartrain Beach and sat in on a LMA meeting at which Pontchartrain Beach was discussed.

Mr. Arrigo explained that, historically, the CPRA and State of Louisiana have taken the position that the FPA should not pursue a higher level of protection beyond the 100-year level because it caused problems for the CPRA/State as the local sponsor since other parts of the State do not have 100-year protection. He stated that as a result of a discussion that took place after yesterday's CPRA meeting, he noticed that their position on this issue is starting to change.

E. Discussion about a technical advisor for engineering and coastal matters.

Mr. Joanen explained that he would like to see the role of the Coastal Committee expanded to include technical issues. To facilitate discussions, Mr. Joanen advised that he will prepare a written proposal to address melding the two concepts (coastal and technical) and having an independent person(s) report to the Committee each year.

Mr. Morgan advised that both the FPA-West and CPRA had technical committees to investigate new ideas, such as oyster reefs in 2007 and trees that grow in coastal zones. He also explained that one of the assumptions made in 2007 or 2008 for the design of the Hurricane and Storm Damage Risk Reduction System (HSDRRS) was that sea level rise by the end of the century would be one meter. Therefore, although not authorized by Congress, the USACE was encouraged to build the major hard HSDRRS structures to provide 500-year protection.

F. Recap of meetings with the FPA's partners on coastal projects.

Mark Schexnayder, Biologist with Batture, LLC, thanked the FPA for the letters of support. He advised that several CWPPRA projects were nominated last week, including PPL 32 in New Orleans East. He stressed the important of having multiple lines of defense. He explained that when the engineering for a living shoreline project is done correctly and with nature, and there is an appropriate available sediment source, the shoreline will continue to build and keep pace with sea level rise.

Craig Gothreaux thanked the FPA for its support of CWPPRA PPL 32. He pointed out that the construction of living shorelines is not a new concept and that living shorelines are additive protection and are not intended to replace actual hardened structures.

Mr. Gothreaux advised that PPL 32 extends from South Shore Harbor to Lincoln Beach, which makes it a CWPPRA scale project in terms of total funds and allows it to be a model that can be applied to the stretch that fronts Bayou Sauvage and with slight changes to the west. The entire Lake Pontchartrain south shore levee system has turned the shoreline into a highly altered, hardened landscape, which is needed to provide robust storm surge protection, but comes at the expense of the natural environmental and ecological systems.

Mr. Gothreaux pointed out that the USACE's 2021 General Reevaluation Report (Study) was completed; however, funding authorization is needed for the work. After reviewing the study, he realized that the sand dredged to access the foreshore protection could be used as a template for building platforms. He pointed out an existing shallow shelf that could provide a perfect environment for seagrass beds; however, wave energy wears down the seagrass because currently there is no protection. Increasing the protective feature could knock down the wave energy, thus allowing the seagrass to grow and natural processes to take place. An attempt is being made to identify materials that are close, and, therefore, cheap to utilize. He stressed that the design for PPL 32 would be practical and would not interfere with access dredging for future levee lifts or other methods of maintaining and improving the HSDRRS, nor restrict the flow or maintenance of any outfall structure. The design would include nature-based, green infrastructure concepts to complement the HSDRRS, and would soften the shoreline, re-establish natural habitats and provide eco-system services.

Mr. Gothreaux further explained that the concept for PPL 32 is to provide multiple iterations of protection:

- 20 acres of reef habitat (3.5 miles) using low and wide reef breakwaters to absorb wave energy
- 134 acres of created marsh by beneficial use of dredged materials to create marsh terrace platforms that will help to buffer and knock down wave energy and provide some filtration capacity
- 96 acres of improved habitat for SAV (Submerged Aquatic Vegetation) colonization

Mr. Gothreaux advised that the estimated construction cost, plus 25 percent contingency, is \$10 million to \$15 million. The project includes a total of 250 acres and the net benefit at 20 years would be 100 to 150 acres. He pointed out that a living shoreline is not a one-time static project. It is built from the inside out and must be serviced.

Mr. Joanen pointed out that the proposed project would increase the lifespan of the toe of the levee system. The creation of living shoreline projects along the entirety of the Lake Pontchartrain southern shoreline could take from ten to fifteen years; however, it would make a huge difference. Projects such as PPL 32 also decrease the toxicity levels for outfalls from drainage systems.

Mr. Joanen thanked Mr. Gothreaux for his presentation.

There was no further business; therefore, the meeting was adjourned at 9:40 a.m.