



# LOUISIANA WILDLIFE FEDERATION

*"... conserving our natural resources and your right to enjoy them since 1940."*

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U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
P.O. Box 49567  
Atlanta, GA 30345

Louisiana Coastal Protection & Restoration Authority  
ATTN: Joanna Hicks  
P.O. Box 44027  
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

On behalf of the Louisiana Wildlife Federation (LWF), please accept our comments regarding the Draft Restoration Plan and Environmental Assessment #2: Provide and Enhance Recreational Opportunities (Draft Recreational Use Plan).

LA TIG proposes to implement four projects by "reallocating \$22 million in early restoration funds towards other proposed alternative projects that would restore for lost recreational use in Louisiana, with a specific focus on enhancing recreational fishing opportunities." The four projects are:

- Elmer's Island Access - \$6,000,000
- Statewide Artificial Reefs - \$6,000,000
- Lake Charles Science Center and Educational Complex - \$7,000,000
- Island Road Piers - \$3,000,000

## **Elmer's Island Access**

Louisiana Wildlife Federation (LWF) has long been a supporter of expanding recreational use of Elmer's Island. LWF led a 7-year campaign to preserve and reopen the area, urging the State to purchase the land and maintain it for conservation and public recreation. We are pleased to see the inclusion of multiple features such as additional parking areas and boat launches, an elevated boardwalk, walking paths, and an observation area. These additions would greatly enhance the recreational opportunities of Elmer's Island. A boardwalk would serve as a fitting alternative for beach access now that driving on the beach is prohibited due to the completion of the Caminada Headland Beach and Dune Restoration project.

Trash and debris removal has been an issue on Elmer's Island for quite some time. LWF has advocated for trash removal to be added to the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries' Elmer's Island Refuge Management Plan and is pleased to see this included in the Draft Recreational Use Plan as a long-term maintenance activity.

The inclusion of signage is important to increase environmental awareness and promote stewardship. We suggest including signage at the refuge entrance, along the boardwalk, and near sensitive areas such as shorebird nesting sites, as well as other appropriate locations across the refuge.

While LWF supports the proposed features, we would also like to see the inclusion of permanent bathroom facilities as it would "enhance/aid recreational users' ability to access and enjoy fishing, wildlife viewing, and natural resources educational opportunities within the refuge" – criteria mentioned

for meeting the component benefits as stated in the Draft Recreational Use Plan. These proposed upgrades to Elmer's Island are expected to result in a significant increase in the number of visitors to the refuge and, therefore, we believe it would justify the addition of permanent bathroom facilities.

Elmer's Island Wildlife Refuge is very deserving of (at least) the proposed \$6,000,000 for improved recreational opportunities. We believe these upgrades would increase the number of visitors to the refuge and enhance the recreational experience of Elmer's Island.

### **Statewide Artificial Reefs**

LWF was an early promoter for establishing the Louisiana Artificial Reef Development Program. As an organization with many members who are passionate about saltwater fishing, we remain supportive of inshore and nearshore reefs for recreational users to enjoy, especially at sites that are easily accessible for relatively small boats. We support adding new reef material to increase habitat complexity of the reef complex and providing increased recreational fishing opportunities to the public.

### **Island Road Piers**

As the most heavily utilized Wildlife Management Area in the state, Point-aux-Chenes is a popular destination for fishing, crabbing, and cast-netting activities. Island Road is a very popular pull-over spot for recreational users, however, it is not always safe to do so. LWF is supportive of the proposed development of five road-side pullovers/parking areas with adjoining fishing piers.

The draft plan states that there are funds dedicated to long-term operations and maintenance, "including the development and distribution of outreach materials and trash collection/removal services". However, this does not address maintenance of the road itself. As many people that access this road know, Island Road is susceptible to flooding by storms and wind-driven tides, making them impassable and, thus, making the proposed fishing pier inaccessible.

It is our suggestion that a long-term commitment from Terrebonne Parish Government be established to maintain (or rebuild) the asphalt road used to access these proposed facilities or include funding for this as part of the long-term operations and maintenance for this project.

We are very excited to see funds proposed for Elmer's Island as well as improvements to artificial reefs and Island Road piers. These projects would significantly increase the opportunities to sportsmen and women and other outdoor enthusiasts to enjoy Louisiana's natural resources that were severely impacted by the 2010 Deepwater Horizon oil spill. We appreciate the opportunity to submit these comments on the Draft Recreational Use Plan.

Louisiana Wildlife Federation represents 24 affiliate organizations comprising more than 7,200 members and is dedicated to the conservation of Louisiana's wildlife and natural resources.

Sincerely,



Rebecca Triche  
Executive Director