

November 12, 2014

Jerome Zeringue, Chair  
Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority  
P.O. Box 44027  
Baton Rouge, LA 70804-4027

Re: River Reintroduction into Maurepas Swamp

Dear Mr. Zeringue:

The undersigned organizations and officials strongly support the inclusion of the restoration project, River Reintroduction into Maurepas Swamp, as a nominated project for consideration of RESTORE Act funding.

The River Reintroduction into Maurepas Swamp project is nearly ready for construction, with approximately 95% of the design completed. This project has been under consideration for several years. Funding for this project to cover remaining engineering and design, and permitting would be an important step in getting this project into construction.

This project will play a key role in the restoration of Lake Maurepas, a unique and protective ecosystem consisting of the second largest coastal forest in Louisiana, and provide storm and floodwater protection for multiple communities. The swamp has been in decline for decades due to saltwater intrusion, subsidence, and chronic flooding. Levees have prevented the Mississippi River from delivering freshwater, nutrients, and sediment to the swamp. Studies show that rising salinities in the lake are causing tree mortality, and 87% of the swamp is dying. Without the cypress and tupelo trees, the lake will convert to marsh and open water. Lake Maurepas is connected to Lake Pontchartrain through the Manchac Pass. This pass is one of the main connections of upstream freshwater to Lake Pontchartrain. Therefore, the health of Maurepas Swamp will affect the health of Lake Pontchartrain and the entire basin. The majority of coastal swamps in the Pontchartrain Basin are deteriorating, and most of them will be lost to open water in the near future if no action is taken.

The Maurepas project is a large-scale project because of the extensive impact area expected to benefit from the reintroduction of Mississippi River water. The project is expected to maintain 45,000 acres of coastal swampland over the next 50 years.

River Reintroduction into Maurepas Swamp has long been discussed as an important coastal restoration project and is currently included in Louisiana's Coastal Master Plan as the West Maurepas Diversion project. The project has long been included in coastal planning, including Coast2050, Louisiana Coastal Area Study, and the 2007 Coastal Master Plan. Each project sponsor and plan recognized the importance of this project for coastal restoration, and invested in the project's planning, engineering, and design.

Lake Maurepas' swamp habitat is threatened by saltwater intrusion, long term subsidence, and lack of nutrients to sustain it, as a result of isolation from the Mississippi River. The area

Re: River Reintroduction into Maurepas Swamp- page 2

provides valuable habitat for wildlife and fish in the Pontchartrain Basin, including in the Maurepas Swamp Wildlife Management Area (WMA). The WMA would benefit greatly from enhanced fish and wildlife habitat. The swamp also provides important storm protection as a natural buffer for coastal communities. Without reintroduction of freshwater from the Mississippi River, much of the swamp can be expected to convert into open water in the near future. With the ability to utilize the resources of the river and operate the project for decades to come, this project will lead to a more resilient coastal forest system in the Lake Maurepas area.

In conclusion, the 2012 Coastal Master Plan data demonstrated that the swamp could be completely lost in a mere two decades. We commend the CPRA for nominating this project to the RESTORE Council. Due to the urgency of getting this project constructed and operating, the below signatories urge Louisiana's Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority, and the RESTORE Council, to select this project for funding.

Sincerely,

Rebecca Triche, Executive Director  
Louisiana Wildlife Federation

Jason Amato, Council Member  
St. James Parish

Ryan Schilling, President  
East Ascension Sportsman's League

Alvin St. Pierre, Jr, Council Member  
St. James Parish

Troy Schexnayder, President  
American Sportsmen Against Poaching

Michael Wright, Council Vice-Chairman  
St. John the Baptist Parish

Clay Schexnayder, State Representative  
District 81 (Ascension, St. James Parishes)

Cheryl Millet, Council Member  
St. John the Baptist Parish

Ann L. Taylor, Commissioner  
LA Wildlife and Fisheries Commission

William H. Herke, PhD.  
Fishery Scientist

Tommy Martinez, Parish President  
Ascension Parish

Timmy Roussel, Parish President  
St. James Parish

Natalie Robottom, Parish President  
St. John the Baptist Parish

Chris Loar, Council Member  
Ascension Parish