



Caminada Headlands State Seashore Concept

(Presented to the Coastal Protection & Restoration Authority, Dec. 9, 2009 in New Orleans)

Thank you for the opportunity to present the concept of the Caminada Headlands State Seashore (CHSS or State Seashore). I am Randy Lanctot, Executive Director of the Louisiana Wildlife Federation (LWF), and with me today are Al Danos, Chairman of the Board of the South Lafourche Beachfront Development District (District) and Travis Moore of the Moore Planning Group (MPG, LLC).

Establishment of the CHSS is an extension of efforts to restore public access to Elmer's Island and the Fourchon Beach at Hwy 3090. At about the same time Elmer's Island was closed to the public in 2002, public access to and along the Fourchon Beach was also being curtailed. The LWF and the District were working independently, but simultaneously, on a very similar concept, and when we each learned about what the other was doing, we began working together to advance the State Seashore idea. Responding to LWF's request, the Moore Planning Group volunteered to develop this short Power Point which represents the concept envisioned by both the District and LWF.

We define a state seashore as an undeveloped length of shoreline, adjacent waters and beach of significant quality, scale and character that is managed for conservation of natural resources and compatible (with conservation) public uses, and that is accessible to the public via land and water.

Establishing a "state seashore" is consistent with Objectives # 3 and #4 of Louisiana's Comprehensive Master Plan for a Sustainable Coast which are to: "Provide habitats suitable to support an array of commercial and recreational activities coastwide" and "Sustain, to the extent practicable, the unique coastal heritage of Louisiana by protecting historic properties and traditional living cultures and their ties and relationships to the natural environment." It is also consistent with the idea of integrating coastal protection and restoration with value-added public and economic benefits.

To explain why the Caminada Headlands, rather than somewhere else along the Louisiana coast, should be considered for designation as a "State Seashore," we offer the following.

An obvious idea: The Caminada Headlands is the only non-developed, conveniently (relatively) accessible from land, 14-mile stretch of shoreline and beach in a state with

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one of the longest coastlines of any US coastal state.

A compelling idea: To restore public access and use, for which there is a strong public demand, that was traditionally enjoyed via the Elmer's Island road and Hwy 3090 prior to 2002.

Not a new idea, though a different vision: The Louisiana Office of State Parks included a concept plan for a state park from Caminada to Belle Passes in its 1997-2012 Master Plan.

There are other reasons why the Caminada Headlands should be Louisiana's "State Seashore" like the cultural and economic importance of the area, the natural resources, including game and commercial fish, birds and other wildlife that are abundant there, and the opportunities for education and interpretation of what can, without challenge, be considered the epitome of Louisiana's "working coast."

We believe that, in addition to serving Louisiana residents, the CHSS would attract cultural and eco tourists from around the country, and the world. The State Seashore would generate significant economic benefits to the Grand Isle and South Lafourche communities (See the LSU AgCenter Survey/Report – "Elmer's Island Coastal Preference Survey" published Dec. 2003; and Spring '04 "Louisiana Wetland News").

The establishment of the Caminada Headlands State Seashore would restore a lost element of regional cultural heritage and would present the opportunity for interpretation of a region that is not only unique in the state, but unique in the United States and the world. (The CHSS grades from the relatively natural Elmer's Island to industrial Port Fourchon with its skyscraping cranes, their huge arms seeming to emerge from the marsh to make the most improbable skyline. Seaward, oil and gas production platforms arise from the Gulf floor, coexisting with shrimp trawlers and seabirds and the abundance below. And anywhere along the beach, families can find remarkable angling and crabbing and birding; all in a relatively natural setting.)

The Caminada Headland is a place where the elements of natural resources, conservation, restoration, protection, commerce, recreation, public desire, cultural heritage and opportunities converge. The Elmer's Island and Fourchon Beaches historically have been popular destinations for families and those seeking a great beach experience.

With the State Seashore, we hope that we can preserve the opportunity for families of

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future generations to enjoy the many recreational uses of the seashore. It is important that we maintain this part of our culture. An example of the potential of this idea is the Surf Side community in Texas, south of Houston, which attracts between 20,000 and 40,000 people to their beach every summer weekend. If we can attract just a fraction of that number to our seashore, this would have tremendous economic impact to our area.

There is an opportunity to establish the CHSS compatibly with the planned \$300 million state/federal Caminada Headlands Ecosystem Restoration Project (CHERP). A State Seashore will be one very welcomed and appreciated public benefit from the billions of dollars being spent on coastal protection and restoration. (Note: Just for your information, the Gulf State Park Pier in Alabama was constructed with a \$8 million CIAP grant approved by the MMS, so, although we are not at this time suggesting that coastal restoration/protection \$ should be allocated to providing associated recreational opportunities, it is worth noting that, at least the state of Alabama has deemed public recreation a worthy use of Coastal Impact Assistance dollars.)

By embracing and appropriately developing* this shoreline as a cultural and recreational asset, available to the public to respectfully use with adequate guidance and supervision, it will fortify the public's resolve to preserve and properly care for this extraordinary part of Louisiana's heritage. Thus, we believe that the establishment of the CHSS will help to assure that the Caminada Headland is sustained.

* To avoid any misperception, "developing" as used here means providing for the public purposes of the State Seashore and does not mean construction of buildings, roadways or any physical structures along the seashore, with the exception of walkways or other low-impact structures provided for the purpose of avoiding or minimizing any impact that might occur due to public use.

The final slide illustrates in a general way some of the envisioned activities along different reaches of the State Seashore. You have more details of that and other aspects of the concept in the package we have provided.

One concern that is addressed in Item B on Page 4 of your handout, but that we also want to emphasize in this presentation, regards vehicle use along the shore. To touch on it briefly, our intent is that no private vehicle use be allowed from the mouth of Bayou Thunder west to Bayou Moreau. Where private vehicle use can be allowed it will be restricted to the "main traveled way," that is, driving landward of the "hard" sand along the shore will NOT be allowed except to park within a designated minimal distance of the waterline.

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No parking or beach use will be allowed in designated restricted areas such as the Chevron and LOOP pipeline crossings. Pending surveys of bird use (and turtles, if present), seasonal closures to vehicle use may be applied to protect nest sites. Currently, the use of ATVs is prohibited along the shoreline within Lafourche Parish and the intent is to continue that restriction. Sufficient signage and supervision will be provided to assure compliance with these requirements.

We have come before the Coastal Protection & Restoration Authority to make the first official public presentation of this idea out of respect for and recognition of your authority and responsibility to conserve and protect our coast and its dependent natural resources, including the citizens of our state and nation. We are not requesting any action at this time, but ask that you fully consider the Caminada Headlands State Seashore concept and your role in moving it forward. We realize that this idea must have your favor, and be your idea for it to become reality, and we hope to work with you to achieve that outcome. Thank you for your kind attention. We will try to address any questions you may have.