Presentation Notes

Louisiana Trustee Implementation Group Restoration Plan/Environmental Assessment #7: Restore and Conserve Wetlands, Coastal and Nearshore Habitats and Birds

September 3, 2020

This document is intended to accompany the Louisiana Trustee Implementation Group's presentation slides from their September 3, 2020 Public Meeting webinar.

Slide 1:

Thank you for your time today. My name is Matt Mumfrey and I work for the Louisiana Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority. I am here today with several of my colleagues from CPRA and the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries to provide an overview of the Louisiana Trustee Implementation Group and our most recently released restoration plan focused on the restoration and conservation of coastal wetlands and nearshore habitats and birds. In Restoration Plan #7, the Louisiana Trustee Implementation Group is proposing the selection of 2 construction preferred alternatives and 3 preferred alternatives to advance to Engineering and Design. After the presentation, we will take your comments on Restoration Plan #7.

Slide 2:

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 bring you up to today. As this timeline shows, 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. 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 released over 10 restoration plans selecting projects that will restore for injuries in Louisiana, ranging from bids to oysters to wetlands and nearshore habitats to restoring for lost recreational opportunities as a result of the oil spill. On August 20, 2020, we released Draft RP/EA #7 which considers additional Wetlands, Coastal, and Nearshore Habitat restoration projects and Bird restoration projects. The public comment period is currently open and will close on September 22, 2020.

Slide 3:

So where does the Louisiana Trustee Implementation Group fit within this universe? 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 4:

The Louisiana TIG includes representation from 5 State and 4 Federal Trustees. The Federal Trustees are the Department of Interior represented by Erin Chandler, 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 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 5:

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 6:

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

Slide 7:

Within the Restore and Conserve Habitat Restoration Category, there is approximately $4 B for Wetlands, Coastal, and Nearshore Habitats, and three of the projects we will discuss today – the Grand Chenier Ridge and Marsh Creation project and the Terrebonne Basin Ridge and Marsh Creation project: Bayou Terrebonne Increment (both proposed for Construction funding) as well as the Bird's Foot Delta Hydrologic Restoration project (proposed for E&D funding) – are proposed to be funded from those dollars for a total of $227.3M. Within the Replenish and Protect Living Coastal and Marine Resources, Louisiana has $148.5 M for Bird Restoration. In this Plan, the TIG proposes the Isle Au Pitre Restoration project and the Terrebonne HNC Island Restoration as proposed preferred alternatives for E&D funding for a total of $6.6M.

Slide 8:

In the Draft RP/EA #7, the Louisiana TIG presents proposed projects to restore and conserve wetlands, coastal, and nearshore habitats injured by the Deepwater Horizon oil spill. The Draft RP/EA evaluates a total of seven restoration project alternatives. Of those, two are identified as proposed preferred alternatives for construction funding and three are proposed as preferred alternatives for E&D Funding.

We will first walk through the two proposed construction projects and then the three proposed E&D projects. The first proposed project is the Grande Cheniere Ridge Marsh Creation Project. I will now turn the presentation over to Tye Fitzgerald of CPRA to present on this project.

Slide 9:

If selected the Grande Cheniere Ridge Marsh Creation project would be located in the Barataria Basin in Plaquemines Parish, and Southwest of the Mississippi River. This project proposes two Mississippi River borrow areas, is composed of four (4) marsh creation areas, and an earthen ridge.

Slide 10:

If selected, this proposed project would create approximately 11,200 feet of earthen ridge and 580 acres of marsh. In construction, sediment would be dredged from the Mississippi River and pumped up to 8.5 miles to create the marsh habitat. The remaining E&D and Construction cost for this project is $65M.

Slide 11:

Assuming RP 7 is completed in November 2020 and the Grand Chenier Ridge project is selected for construction funding, the remaining project schedule and milestones would be...

Slide 12:

And now Micaela Coner will present on the proposed Terrebonne Basin Ridge and Marsh Creation: Bayou Terrebonne Increment Project.

Slide 13:

The proposed Terrebonne Basin Ridge and Marsh Creation Project: Bayou Terrebonne Increment, is located in Terrebonne Parish, along the east bank of Bayou Terrebonne, south of Chauvin. The goal of the proposed marsh creation and ridge restoration project is to restore and conserve coastal wetlands and habitats impacted by the DWH oil spill.

Slide 14:

The objective of this proposed project is to create or enhance coastal wetlands through the placement of dredged material. The proposed project would create up to 1,430 acres of brackish and saline marsh and restore up to 80 acres of earthen ridge. The project area is in Terrebonne Parish, along the east bank of Bayou Terrebonne, south of Chauvin. The proposed project area is a roughly linear area running from north to south located from 0.7 to 3 miles east of Highway 56, Little Caillou Road. Chauvin is the closest village to the north of the project, and Cocodrie is the closest village to the south of the project. The maximum constructed marsh fill elevation is anticipated to be +4.0 feet NAVD 88 to maximize the duration in which restored marsh would be at an intertidal elevation throughout the 20-year project life. Approximately 65,600 linear feet of earthen containment dike would be constructed to contain the marsh fill material. They would be constructed with in-situ material adjacent to the marsh creation areas, and are expected to be constructed with a crest elevation of +4.5 to +5.0 feet NAVD 88, with an approximate crown width of 5.0 ft. The ridge feature is expected to be constructed to an elevation of +5.0 to +6.0 feet NAVD 99 with a minimum crown width of 20 feet. The ridge would serve as a portion of earthen containment dike on the western side of the marsh creation area. Where this occurs, existing breaks in the ridge would be closed to contain marsh fill. Where the ridge breaks are within

historic bayous/channel cuts, they would be left open to maintain navigational access and hydrologic conditions. Bayou Terrebonne is the planned borrow source for ridge restoration. Bayou Terrebonne would be dredged to a maximum cut depth of -22.0 feet NAVD 88 to obtain material to construct the ridge feature. The Lake Barre borrow area would be dredged to a maximum cut depth of -23.0 feet NAVD 88 to obtain sediment for the marsh fill areas. Two pipeline corridors would be used to convey sediment from the Lake Barre borrow area to the marsh fill areas. The two sections of the Lake Barre borrow area range from 3 to 10 miles from the marsh fill areas. The pipeline corridors were designed to avoid traversing vegetated wetlands. Up to 49,030 linear feet of articulated concrete block mats may be used as shoreline armoring for ridge and earthen containment dike segments exposed to scour from wave erosion. The engineering and design phase of the project was funded by NRDA at a cost of approximately $5.345M. If this project is selected for funding, the final engineering and design (E&D), construction, operations and maintenance (O&M), and monitoring and adaptive management (MAM) costs $156,343,233 M are projected, for a total project cost of ~$161.7M

Slide 15:

The construction permit was submitted in June 2020. The 95% design milestone is anticipated in March 2021. If this project is selected for construction funding, the final design and bid documents would be prepared for an anticipated bid date of December 2021.

Slide 16:

We'll now turn it over to Katie Freer of CPRA and Todd Baker of LDWF to discuss the remaining E&D Proposed Preferred Alternatives, starting with the Bird's Foot Delta Hydrologic Restoration Project.

Slide 17:

Located at the southernmost end of the Mississippi River, the Bird's Foot Delta is home to a unique assemblage of freshwater and marine fisheries, migratory and resident birds, an uncommon blend of marine and freshwater reptiles, and marine and terrestrial mammals. Most of these wetlands are managed for wildlife conservation and open to the public for recreational use.

Slide 18:

This habitat is also the closest landmass to the DWH oil spill. As such, the Bird's Foot Delta was the first land struck by oil from the spill, experienced the most re-oiling events, and saw the highest concentrations of oil. The impacts from the DWH oil spill were widespread here with many miles of the delta's shoreline oiled during the spill.

Slide 19:

If selected, E&D will be conducted, and a future construction project could be considered in a subsequent RP/EA in which the following results can reasonably be expected. This proposed project would address those widespread oil spill impacts by dredging South Pass, Pass-a-Loutre, and a portion of Southeast Pass. The proposed project would initially yield measurable benefits by building new wetlands from the dredged sediment; however, the primary long-term project benefits would result from restoring the hydrology of the Bird's Foot Delta. With flow increased through the passes proposed for dredging, the Mississippi River would be able to disperse its sediment laden freshwater payload to the marshes and bayous of the delta. Hydrologic restoration would revitalize the riverine land building

processes of the Mississippi River and lower salinity, benefitting approximately 100,000 acres of the Bird's Foot Delta. Popular recreational activities that would benefit include fishing, hunting, boating, camping, and several other non-consumptive activities. E&D activities are estimated to cost $6 million over approximately three years.

Slides 21 and 22:

Isle au Pitre is an important colonial bird colony in St. Bernard Parish, located southeast of Bay St. Louis. Bird species that currently depend on this island for nesting habitat include brown pelicans, clapper rail, black skimmers, terns, and laughing gulls.

Slide 23:

Only a few dozen acres of this island remain above water. It has been battered by storms and shell hash is currently encroaching on the island, destroying vegetation and increasing vulnerability to erosion. If this island is not restored and/or protected it would likely erode to open water, and suitable nesting habitat on the island would be lost.

Slide 24:

If selected, this project will receive funding for E&D. The proposed project would enhance nesting conditions on the existing island by elevating portions of the island with dredged sediment and planting suitable vegetation for nesting brown pelicans and wading birds. If, during design, there is an economically feasible method to increase the size of the island, the footprint of the island would be expanded by up to approximately 80 acres. The habitat would also be diversified with the addition of shell rakes for American oystercatchers and shell or small limestone on the perimeter of the island to create attractive tern and black skimmer nesting habitat. The project would protect the island from wind driven wave energy by installing a shoreline protection feature that would incorporate benefits to oysters. Several options would be explored during design to include simple rock breakwaters with horizontal structures that would be attractive for oyster attachment and reef recruitment.

Slide 26:

The Terrebonne Bay HNC Colony is a colonial waterbird nesting island in Terrebonne Parish, just southeast of Cocodrie. The island is currently only 32 acres, but suitable nesting habitat on the island for brown pelicans and wading birds is less than ten acres. Bird species that currently depend on this island for nesting include brown pelicans, roseate spoonbills, royal terns, tricolored herons, laughing gulls, and various other species.

Slide 27:

The island is currently only 32 acres, but suitable nesting habitat on the island for brown pelicans and wading birds is less than ten acres. Bird species that currently depend on this island for nesting include brown pelicans, great egrets, roseate spoonbills, royal terns, tricolored herons, laughing gulls, and various other species.

Slide 28:

If selected for NRDA funding, this proposed project would be designed to restore and enlarge the island from its current size of 32 acres to approximately 50 acres. Following substantial completion of E&D, the

proposed project would then be considered for construction funding in a subsequent restoration plan. As we have done with other bird restoration projects, the project would be accomplished by importing dredged sediment from a nearby suitable sand source and disposing of it adjacent and onto the existing island. Prior to placing sand, the existing rock ring would be restored to its previous 50-acre perimeter. The elevation of the island would be increased to prevent routine tidal inundation and increase nesting success. Limestone aggregate would be deposited adjacent to the edge of the island to create a low maintenance beach-like feature for nesting terns. Following construction, the island would be planted with suitable vegetation to provide optimal nesting substrate.

Slide 29:

The restoration plan and environmental assessment describing this project 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 30:

Take a look at the 'Questions' box at the bottom of the GoToWebinar control panel (shown on this slide). If you have a comment you would like to share with the Trustees, please type it into this box and we will read as many comments as we can in the time allotted. I will now hold for a few moments to allow for public comment. Thank you!