



February 26, 2022

CPRA 2023 Annual Plan  
150 Terrace Ave  
Baton Rouge, LA 70802

Email attachment sent to: [coastal@la.gov](mailto:coastal@la.gov)

Re: FY2023 Annual Plan

Dear Mr. Bren Haase:

On behalf of the Louisiana Oyster Task Force, I am writing to express our concerns about the Louisiana Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority's Draft Fiscal Year 2023 Annual Plan.

As a third-generation oyster farmer and lifelong resident of Plaquemines Parish, Louisiana, I want to state my strong opposition toward the more than \$1 billion budgeted for the construction of the highly divisive Mid-Barataria Sediment Diversion project.

This controversial project is being forced upon us at the expense of our fisheries and essential fish habitat, our industry's jobs and our coastal heritage and way of life. The Louisiana oyster industry has been a major fishery for over 150 years. Our industry has faced many challenges – natural and manmade – including hurricanes, oil spills, freshwater intrusions, and countless others, but I truly do not know how we will rebound from the operation of the MBSD.

Consider the opening of the Bonnet Carre Spillway in 2019. For 118 days, fresh, polluted water was diverted through the Spillway to ease pressure on the levees from the Mississippi River killing millions of pounds of oysters and creating pockets of hypoxia and harmful algal blooms.

There is too much at stake with zero guarantee of substantive land development. Just look at the historical outcomes from the Davis Pond Diversion, Caernarvon Diversion and Fort St. Philip Crevasse. All have resulted in a net land *loss* after they

began. Fort St. Philip, slightly larger than the proposed MBSD, *lost* 52% of land after it began in 1973 that has yet to be restored.

Furthermore, it is a complete misappropriation of funding to use DWH NRDA resources for the construction of the MBSD. DWH NRDA was designated “to return the natural resources injured by the spill to the condition they would have been in if the spill had not occurred.” The MBSD project will cause additional injury to many of the same eco-resources damaged by the DWH oil spill including bottlenose dolphins, seafood fisheries, and Essential Fish Habitat.

Oyster reefs provide numerous benefits for a healthy coastal environment including buffering coasts from waves, reducing erosion, and creating calmer waters that support the growth of coastal marshes and seagrass beds, which can in turn provide their own flood and erosion reduction benefits.

Important assets like historical oyster reefs should be protected and not seen as mere collateral damage. Louisiana’s coastal communities depend on the health of these estuaries for economic sustenance. There are far better ways to invest in our coast without sacrificing the diversity of our estuaries and destroying current fish and wildlife habitat.

Sincerely,

Mitch Jurisich, Chairman

Louisiana Oyster Task Force