



# LOUISIANA WILDLIFE FEDERATION

*The voice of Louisiana's wildlife and natural resources since 1940.*

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February 17, 2026

Re: Louisiana Wildlife Federation Public Comment on the CPRA Draft FY 2027 Annual Plan

Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority (CPRA)  
Annual Plan Comment  
150 Terrance Ave.  
Baton Rouge, LA 70802

[coastal@la.gov](mailto:coastal@la.gov)

Dear CPRA Director Hare:

On behalf of the board of directors of the Louisiana Wildlife Federation (LWF), thank you for the opportunity to submit formal comments on the Draft Fiscal Year 2027 Annual Plan. LWF is a statewide nonprofit organization representing 23 affiliate organizations and more than 11,000 members dedicated to the conservation of Louisiana's wildlife and natural resources. LWF has a long history of supporting science-based coastal protection and restoration efforts that conserve fish and wildlife resources, protect public lands, and sustain the ecological systems that support Louisiana's coastal communities.

We recognize CPRA for advancing a diverse portfolio of restoration, protection, and flood-risk reduction projects and for clearly documenting funding sources, implementation status, and anticipated outcomes in the FY 2027 Draft Annual Plan.

It's good to see projects included in the FY 2027 Annual Plan that are associated with state and federally owned public lands managed by the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries and the United States Fish and Wildlife Service. These projects represent long-term investments in wildlife habitat, public access, and ecosystem resilience and align directly with LWF's mission and conservation priorities. Restoration and protection projects affecting the White Lake Wetlands Conservation Area, Marsh Island Wildlife Refuge, and the Chandeleur Islands at Breton National Wildlife Refuge provide irreplaceable habitat for migratory waterfowl, fisheries resources, and resident wildlife while also serving as critical storm-surge buffers and supporting public recreation.

LWF recognizes White Lake Wetlands Conservation Area as one of the most ecologically important and strategically valuable state-owned coastal properties in Louisiana. The FY 2027 Draft Annual Plan identifies continued investment in White Lake restoration, including approximately \$4.3 million in FY 2027 expenditures toward an estimated total project cost of \$264 million. White Lake encompasses approximately 72,000 acres of freshwater and intermediate marsh and provides critical habitat for wintering and migratory waterfowl, wading birds, fisheries species, and other wildlife. The area also plays a key role in Louisiana's endangered whooping crane reintroduction program and supports extensive public recreational use. Maintaining shoreline protection along the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway and the integrity of the north levee system within the White Lake complex are essential to maintaining appropriate hydrology, preventing saltwater intrusion, and

protecting interior marshes from accelerated erosion and conversion to open water. Beyond habitat considerations, White Lake serves as a critical natural storm-surge buffer for inland areas of Vermilion Parish, including Gueydan and other communities. Continued restoration and maintenance of this system represent both sound wildlife-habitat management and prudent flood-risk-reduction strategy.

In addition to White Lake, LWF supports restoration and protection efforts at Marsh Island Wildlife Refuge and Rockefeller Wildlife Refuge. These areas remain critically important components of Louisiana's coastal conservation strategy. The FY 2027 Draft Annual Plan identifies the Marsh Island Restoration Project as being in engineering and design, supported by GOMESA funding, with approximately \$2 million in FY 2027 expenditures toward an estimated total project cost of \$83 million. Marsh Island provides essential brackish and intermediate marsh habitat while also serving as a key storm-surge buffer for Vermilion, Iberia, and St. Mary Parishes. Continued investment in this system, along with maintenance and repair of prior restoration features, is necessary to extend the life of existing projects and preserve long-term wildlife habitat benefits. Similarly, ongoing shoreline protection and marsh restoration efforts associated with Rockefeller Wildlife Refuge play an important role in sustaining one of Louisiana's most productive coastal wildlife areas. These efforts contribute to waterfowl habitat, fisheries productivity, and broader ecosystem resilience in southwest Louisiana and should remain a priority within CPRA's restoration portfolio.

Barrier island restoration also represents a cornerstone of Louisiana's coastal protection framework that LWF believes is significant to maintaining these critical wildlife habitat areas. The Chandeleur Islands Restoration Project, identified in the FY 2027 Draft Annual Plan as being in construction, includes approximately \$50.3 million in FY 2027 expenditures, supported by NRDA and state funding, toward an estimated total project cost of approximately \$383 million. Restoration of roughly 13 miles of North Chandeleur Island, including dune, beach, marsh, and submerged aquatic vegetation features, is critical to sustaining migratory bird habitat, fisheries productivity, and nesting habitat for multiple sea turtle species.

The FY 2027 Draft Annual Plan reflects continued advancement of restoration work on publicly owned conservation lands through the State Wildlife Refuge Marsh Creation Project, a state-only initiative currently progressing through design toward future implementation. Marsh creation on LDWF-managed lands represents a durable investment in wildlife habitat and reinforces the importance of prioritizing restoration projects on lands held permanently in the public trust.

In addition to the noted projects, LWF continues to strongly emphasize that a resilient coastal restoration program must also incorporate sediment-based river diversion strategies alongside marsh creation and shoreline protection. While large-scale sediment diversion projects such as Mid-Barataria and Mid-Breton are not components of the FY 2027 Annual Plan, their inclusion in Louisiana's 2023 Coastal Master Plan reflects the recognized need for large sediment-based restoration projects using river diversions. While much of the western half of Louisiana's coastal zone does not have the advantage of a river delivering freshwater, nutrients, and sediments at the level that the Mississippi River and the Atchafalaya River are able to provide, the southeast area of the state can benefit from connecting a river to its estuaries. Periodic river flow through an estuary replenishes its wetlands naturally and maintains the wetland functions for fish and wildlife productivity we have come to expect in Louisiana.

Smaller-scale diversion projects, such as the Davis Pond Diversion, are validating the ability of river diversion projects to provide targeted benefits by delivering freshwater and sediment to help maintain ecosystem balance and control salinity intrusion. Sediment-based restoration approaches are particularly relevant in southeast coastal areas such as Lake Salvador and Barataria Bay, where

increasing salinity threatens freshwater and intermediate marsh habitats that support waterfowl, fisheries resources, and vegetative communities. LWF continues to support proposed diversion projects along the Mississippi River, such as the Ama Diversion, that could effectively address these concerns.

Thank you for continued support for Mississippi River Gulf Outlet (MRGO) Ecosystem Restoration and the addition of an MRGO overview section with highlights and updates on progress in this year's Draft Annual Plan. We are glad to see CPRA support preliminary efforts for project readiness to help advance the federal MRGO Ecosystem Restoration project with \$1.25 million, as well as the state's continued advocacy for MRGO Ecosystem Restoration at the federal level.

Across the FY 2027 Draft Annual Plan, LWF supports the continued use of a diversified funding portfolio, including CWPPRA (the Breaux Act), GOMESA, RESTORE, NRDA, and state sources. The ability to coordinate these multiple sources of funding remains essential to advancing restoration and protection projects at meaningful scales. While no projects using available NFWF funding were listed in this annual plan, Louisiana must use every dollar available to meet the goals of the master plan.

Louisiana Wildlife Federation is a participating member of the CPRA Coastal Master Plan 2029 CAT Team and we look forward to continued engagement in future planning efforts.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Rebecca Triche".

Rebecca Triche  
Executive Director  
Louisiana Wildlife Federation