

COASTAL AMERICA 2011 AWARDS PROGRAM NOMINATION FORM

Please circle the award type (only one) you are recommending this team for:

Partnership Award - Spirit Award - Special Recognition Award

1. Full Name of Nominated Team: Bayou Dupont Marsh Creation Project Team

2. Nominator Contact Information:

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3. What is the lead Federal Agency (if any) for this project? (or lead organization for Special Recognition Awards): Environmental Protection Agency – Region 6 – CWPPRA Team

4. Please provide a brief abstract overview of the project you are nominating (1 page max.)

Include a short abstract (200 words max) describing the project, including its objectives, scope and longevity. Also, address how the project supports Coastal America’s mission and goals. Questions to consider are: How does the project demonstrate the “value added” of a partnership effort? (I.e. how did the partners collaborate to accomplish what a single entity could not accomplish alone?) This section should also describe how the partners have worked with the Regional Implementation Team in the development of the project.

The Mississippi River Sediment Delivery System – Bayou Dupont Marsh Creation Project is a wetland restoration project that created approximately 580 acres of marsh using Mississippi River Sediment. This project was the first Coastal Wetlands Planning, Protection and Restoration Act (CWPPRA) project to utilize renewable sediment from the Mississippi River for the purposes of marsh creation. The introduction of this otherwise lost sediment in the wetland system was a different approach to the historical use of hydraulically dredged material from within the Barataria Basin. This approach has served as a model for other CWPPRA projects to dredge material from the Mississippi River as a technique to restore and rebuild wetlands in Louisiana. The completion of the project is the result of years of coordination and collaboration with local, state and federal entities to address the numerous project elements such as logistics, land access, design criteria, environmental considerations and construction methodology. Although this project was conducted independent of input from a Coastal America Regional Implementation Team as it was funded through the CWPPRA authorization, completion of this 7.5 year planning, design and construction process is another example of the ability of the CWPPRA program to work with the numerous federal, state and local partners to achieve success.

The Bayou Dupont Marsh Creation Team of managers, scientist, and engineers were able to combine their ecological and engineering expertise of a variety of coastal restoration techniques to implement a project to restore, enhance and protect coastal Louisiana wetlands.

5. Project Need and Resource Benefits/Outputs (2 pages max.) Provide a summary of the project background and the expected resource benefits. For restoration projects, describe any long-term monitoring/management program. For education and outreach projects, describe how the project supports the conservation goals of the partnering organizations. If appropriate, include a description of how the project supports existing Federal, State, and local conservation plans, projects and programs.

Louisiana's coastal zone contains 45 percent of all intertidal coastal marshes in the lower 48 States; however, it is suffering 80 percent of the entire Nation's coastal wetland loss, and at an average rate of 25 square miles per year. Wetlands in the Barataria Basin were historically nourished by the freshwater, sediment and nutrients delivered by the Mississippi River and the many distributary channels. Following the creation of levees along the lower river for flood control and navigation, these inputs ceased. In addition, numerous oil and gas canals in the area contributed significantly to wetland losses. Data suggests that from 1932 to 1990, the basin lost over 245,000 acres of marsh, and from 1978 to 1990, Barataria Basin experienced the highest rate of wetland loss along the entire coast.

Through the CWPPRA program, the Bayou Dupont Marsh Creation Team has worked to help turn the tide on land loss in the State of Louisiana one acre at a time. In Louisiana, the CWPPRA program not only refers to five Federal Agencies including the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS), the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) and the State of Louisiana Office of Coastal Protection and Restoration which comprise the CWPPRA Task Force, but it is also inclusive of all the local stakeholders such as academia, parishes, landowners and individuals who have a vested interest in coastal restoration.

With a project location within Jefferson and Plaquemines parishes, and located near the Mississippi River, there was a prime opportunity to utilize the relatively new initiative of creating marsh using Mississippi River sediment. The objective of the Bayou Dupont Marsh Creation Project was to create sustainable marsh using the renewable resource of Mississippi River sediment in a rapidly eroding and subsiding section of the Barataria landbridge. In order to accomplish this task, approximately 2,300,000 cubic yards of river sediment was pumped using a 16,000 horsepower cutter suction dredge over 5 miles via a temporary sediment pipeline to create 500 acres of marsh. The 32-inch temporary pipeline had to cross over the Mississippi River levee system, through 48-inch casings specifically installed under a state highway and active railroad, down a private road and over a parish levee just to get the material to the project location. Approximately 26,000 units of intertidal marsh vegetation were planted at the marsh creation site, including some performed by students at a local middle school as an educational outreach effort. In addition to the original 500 acres created under CWPPRA, the project also partnered with a NMFS and the State to take advantage of available American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funds to build an additional 80 plus acres of marsh.

The process to accomplish this feat was not nominal task, however the benefits are numerous. The newly created marsh will provide improved habitat conditions for several species of wildlife such as migratory and resident waterfowl, shorebirds, wading birds, and furbearers. Intertidal marsh and marsh edge will also provide increased foraging opportunities for shorebirds and wading birds. Continued success of the project will protect existing marsh, create vegetated wetlands, reduce future land loss and increase the diversity of habitat for a greater variety of wildlife species. The creation of healthy marsh habitat will provide a greater diversity of foraging, breeding, spawning, and cover habitat for a greater variety of adult and juvenile fish and shellfish species. The marsh will contribute nutrients and detritus will be added to the existing food web, providing a positive benefit to local area fisheries. This project will be monitored over the 20 year life of the project to assess the ecological benefits. Project specific monitoring for this site includes short-term geotechnical stations and three long-term monitoring stations. The long-term monitoring stations added to the project will allow for direct comparison to reference station outside the project. Aerial photography will be used to evaluate the changes in land/water ratios within the study area along with ground-based methods such as accretion measurements and periodic topographic surveys.

The construction completion of the Bayou Dupont Marsh Creation project stands as a hallmark achievement. This site served as the showcase of coastal restoration on April 20, 2011, when EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson visited the site with academia, environmental advocates, other EPA officials, community members, non-governmental restoration organization managers, and students. The Bayou Dupont Marsh Creation Team was recognized by EPA Administrator Lisa P. Jackson while touring the CWPPRA Bayou Dupont Project by bringing awareness to the one-year anniversary of our nation's largest oil spill in the Gulf and sharing information about successful marsh restoration projects and the need for additional ecosystem rebuilding efforts. Project teams such as the Bayou Dupont Marsh Creation Team will continue to demonstrate CWPPRA program effectiveness as measured by the volume of projects that have been constructed, the number of wetland acres restored and/or protected, and the successful collaboration between government and the public to accomplish ecosystem-level benefits with limited annual funding. Teams such as Bayou Dupont Marsh Creation Team will continue to be the CWPPRA program's greatest asset in their contribution to turning the tide on Louisiana land loss through addressing immediate restoration needs while establishing a foundation of strong science, public and academia participation, and federal, state and local agency cooperation that will continue to serve as the cornerstone for other future restoration programs.

6. Partnership Functioning - Funding & Other Support (1 page max.) Provide an overview description of each of the partners involved in the project. Include a breakout of the financial and in-kind support provided by each of the individual partners along with a one sentence summary of each element's contribution(s).

The total project cost for the construction of the initial 500 acres of created wetlands was approximately \$28.9M. Funding was approved through the Coastal Wetlands Planning, Protection and Restoration Act

of 1990 by the United States Congress and the Wetlands Conservation Trust Fund by the State of Louisiana. EPA was the federal sponsor for the project with an 85% cost share. OCPR was the local sponsor for the project with a 15% cost share including in-kind services. The EPA Region 6 CWPPRA Team was involved in the initial project development and planning stages, and once funding for the project was procured, continued the role of the grant agency and was involved in the management of the project from the engineering and design, through construction, and into post-construction monitoring. In addition to being involved in the planning and management of the project, OCPR's primary role was to act as the engineering and design services for the EPA, award and manage the construction contract for the project, and continue with post-construction monitoring of the project.

The success of the Bayou Dupont Marsh Creation project was not just due to the efforts the 5 federal agencies and state involved in the CWPPRA, but also due to the efforts of the local partners involved and their continuous support of coastal restoration efforts. The local parishes including, Jefferson and Plaquemines Parishes, were instrumental in supporting the project through the CWPPRA planning stages. The parishes and the landowners, River Rest, LLC and ConocoPhillips, were key players in preventing landrights issues and project access from being a project hurdle. As the property owner of the project area, River Rest, LLC was very cooperative when it came to addressing the issues of a major construction activity such as a marsh creation project. Equally so was the cooperation from ConocoPhillips, who provided an access route for the sediment pipeline.

In addition to being involved as one of the federal CWPPRA Agencies, NMFS was instrumental in expanding the original project footprint by an additional 80 acres of adjacent marsh creation utilizing \$3M in funding available through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. OCPR, NMFS and EPA all worked under a very short time-frame to advantage of the availability of additional funds and the existing construction contract.

7. Team Partners: List all partners and identify project/team leads with an asterisk (*). Please provide all contact information using the format as shown in question 2 above.

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IMPORTANT: If approved; only team members identified in this form will be eligible to receive the Coastal America Award. Please ensure that you correctly identify ALL TEAM MEMBERS.

Additional Information: All nominations must be submitted to the Coastal America National Coordinating Office by August 1, 2011. Winners will be selected and awardees will be notified in accordance with the published milestone schedule. Project photos are welcomed as accompaniments to Award Nomination forms. All materials should be sent via email to the Award Program Coordinator Carli Bertrand at: [Carli.Bertrand@usda.gov] 202-401-9922.