

COASTAL ZONE

Newsletter

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West Shore Lake Pontchartrain Levee Update

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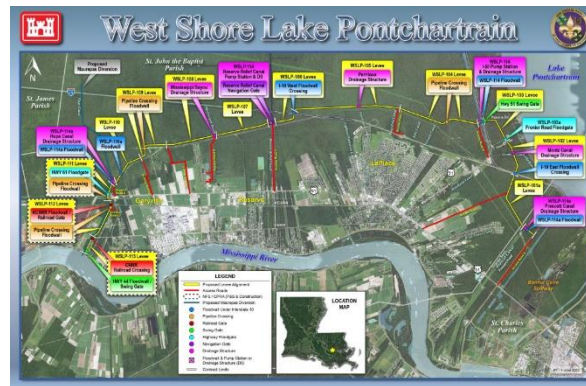


St. John Coastal Updates (5)

As of February 2025, the West Shore Lake Pontchartrain Levee (WSLP) reaches 101a, 102, 103, 104, 105, 106, 107, 108, 109, 110, 114a are under construction. WSLP-110 is on schedule and 98% complete. WSLP-107 is on schedule and 69% complete. All other reaches under construction are less than 60% complete. WSLP reaches 103a, 110a, 111, 112, 113, and 114 are in the pre-construction phase (WSLP-111 – WSLP-113 will be constructed by the LA Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority (CPRA) in conjunction with the River Reintroduction into Maurepas Swamp Project.

During the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) WSLP February Stakeholder Meeting, the Resiliency Study schedule was updated. The next milestone is the Tentatively Selected Plan (TSP), which is anticipated in November 2025. This will be followed by a Draft Report for Public Review in March 2026.

In the November 2024, USACE addressed community concerns with the ongoing construction including flooding in Garyville, LA. USACE stated that current modeling shows no link between the Garyville flooding and WSLP construction. USACE is conducting additional verification using data from Hurricane Francine. Representatives from the Corps also addressed culverts maintenance concerns. St. John the Baptist Parish is assessing the culverts to ensure maintenance accountability.



Regular updates on the WSLP Levee can be found on the [Army Corps' WSLP Website](#) or [Facebook Page](#).

Louisiana Secures Largest Project in the Water Resources Development Act of 2024



In December of 2024, U.S. Congress unanimously passed the Water Resources Development Act of 2024 (WRDA). Renewed every two years, WRDA authorizes and guides USACE projects and studies. Coastal Louisiana has claimed the largest project authorization within the bill through a \$5.9 billion Flood Risk Management Project in St. Tammany Parish.

The St. Tammany Flood Risk Management Project will significantly reduce the flood risk for 26,000 structures within St. Tammany Parish through the construction of a levee around Slidell and the elevation of homes and businesses across the Parish. Additionally, the 2024 WRDA authorized a study of the Lake Pontchartrain Storm Surge Reduction project which allows USACE to consider if the proposal to reduce flood risk for the nine parishes surrounding the lake from the Coastal Master Plan is within federal interest. Other relevant authorizations include a \$50 million environmental infrastructure project for the Pointe Celeste Pumping Station in Plaquemines Parish and the expansion of the study area for Morganza to the Gulf Project to include Point Coupee, Allen, Calcasieu, Jefferson Davis, Acadia, Iberville, and Cameron within the scope of that investigation. To read in more detail about the aspects of WRDA 2024 that are relevant to coastal Louisiana, view CPRA's press release [here](#). Read the full WRDA 2024 bill [here](#).

Christmas Tree Recycling for Coastal Restoration

This holiday season, St. John the Baptist Parish joined many of our fellow Louisiana parishes, including Bossier, Calcasieu, East Baton Rouge, Jefferson, Jefferson Davis, Ouachita, Orleans, St. Charles, St. Bernard, St. Tammany, and Terrebonne Parishes in recycling Christmas trees for Coastal Restoration. Christmas trees were picked up curbside with throughout January and February. The benefits of recycling Christmas trees include providing a barrier that slows down wave action and erosion, aiding in trapping sediment to build land, and keeping trees out of the landfill. St. John partnered with Southeastern Louisiana University's Turtle Cove Environmental Research Station to put our recycled Christmas trees to work in our own backyard and help fight erosion on the Maurepas Landbridge.



Grounding Breaking for the River Reintroduction into the Maurepas Swamp Project

On December 3rd, 2024, CPRA, USACE, the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council, the Pontchartrain Levee District, and St. John the Baptist, St. James, and St. Charles Parishes came together to break ground on the River Reintroduction into Maurepas Swamp project. The Mississippi River Levee has disconnected Maurepas Swamp from its historic freshwater nutrient source.

The diversion is located on the East Bank of the Mississippi River in St. John the Baptist Parish, just west of Garyville. The project will revitalize over 45,000 acres of the swamp with freshwater, sediment, and nutrients to nourish one of the nation’s largest and last remaining coastal freshwater swamps. The project will also serve as mitigation for the WSLP Levee Project. The collaboration between CPRA and USACE represents of a first-of-its-kind relationship in which USACE has accepted a CPRA project for mitigation and the State’s financial contribution for levee construction.



Project Schedule Update

An updated schedule for the completion of the River Reintroduction into the Maurepas Swamp project was released by CPRA (see below). Reach 6 Phase 1 (dredging of the Hope Canal) began construction late last year and will continue through 2026. The project is expected to be complete in 2028. Find more background information [here](#).

Reach	Description	Construction
1/2	Intake Headworks/CN Railroad Crossing	2026-2028
3	Channel/Levee Section	2025-2027
4/5	CPCK (KCS) Railroad Crossing/Airline Highway Crossing	2026-2028
6 Phase 1	Hope Canal Dredging	2024-2026
6 Phase 2	Outfall Features/Guide Levee Lift	2026-2027

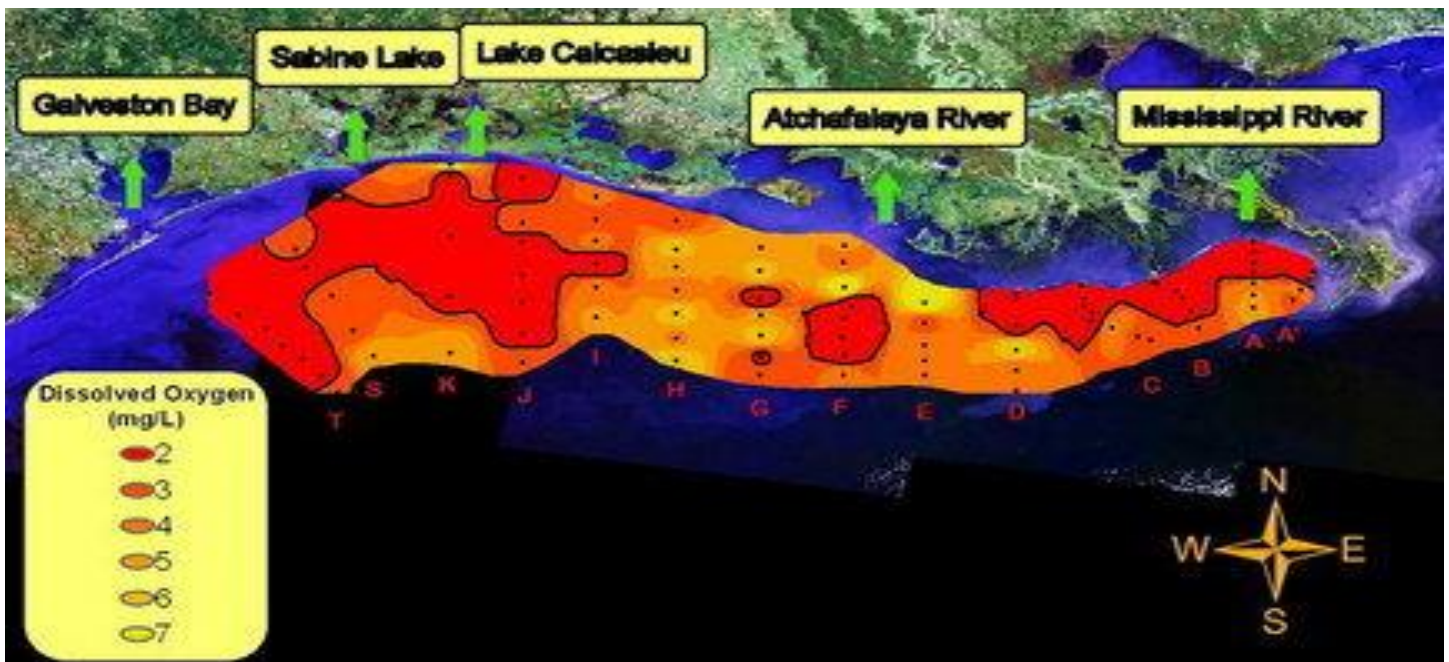


Baton Rouge Entrepreneur becomes global exclusive right holder of Reefbuds

In 2024, Baton Rouge entrepreneur, Johnnie James II, became the global exclusive rights holder of Reefbuds. This technology, originally founded in the Philippines, helps restore coral reefs. If deployed locally, the Reefbuds could help restore the Louisiana Coast's growing dead zone by supporting aquatic plant and animal, sequestering carbon, and lessening wave impacts during storm events. James also wants to pair the organic structures with technological devices to collect underwater data. Reefbuds are porous structures handmade with naturally sourced ingredients like sand, gravel, biomass (such as sugarcane bagasse), a small amount of cement for binding purposes, and metallic oxides. Within 24 to 72 hours of being placed underwater, the structures begin to recruit algae to the surface and act as a habitat for underwater animals to hide and spawn inside. View the Reefbuds website [here](#).

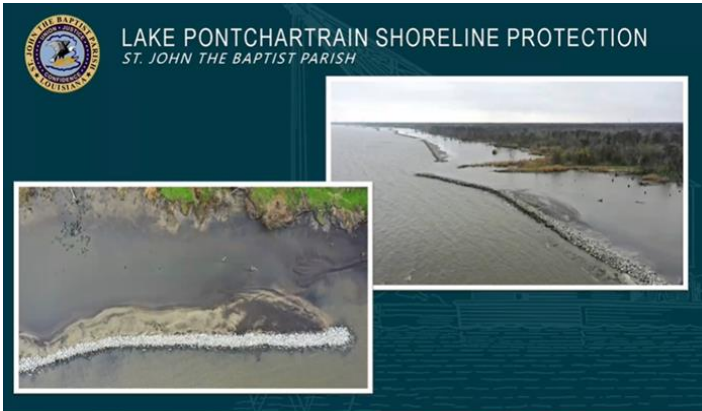


Hypoxic areas, often referred to as dead zones, are areas with depleted oxygen levels. As their name implies, within these dead zones, many marine animals and plants cannot survive. Generally, hypoxia occurs along the Louisiana Coast from late spring to late summer. The effects of the dead zones on the Louisiana coastal communities are widespread, harming commercial and recreational fishing and ecotourism. Learn more about the Gulf's Hypoxic Area (Dead Zone) [here](#).



St. John the Baptist Parish Coastal Updates

Lake Pontchartrain Shoreline Protection Project



St. John the Baptist project featured.

St. John the Baptist's Lake Pontchartrain Shoreline Protection Project at Frenier was featured during the February CPRA board meeting. Funded by a GOMESA bond, the \$10 million project includes the construction of a new breakwater system to help prevent shoreline erosion and increase protection from storm surge events and coastal flooding along Lake Pontchartrain.



Project has been expanded.

Construction of the breakwater on the western shore of Lake Pontchartrain between the St. Charles Parish line and Frenier began in early October. The shoreline has eroded approximately 10 feet per year since 1915. The breakwater will reduce erosion, stabilize the shoreline, and build back additional land through the accretion of sediment. In February, St. John the Baptist Parish Council approved Change Order No. 1 to take advantage of an overrun of rock materials and construct more breakwater length than initially planned. The contractor has completed the breakwater in the original contract and has started access dredging for the Change Order extension now. The project is expected to be completed within a couple months.

Sunset Park Shoreline Restoration



Construction to begin soon.

St. John the Baptist Parish has secured a grant through CPRA's Conservation and Restoration Partnership Fund to design and construct a shoreline restoration project in Sunset Park. A contractor was selected, and construction is set to begin soon. The preliminary surveying at the site has been completed.

Greater New Orleans Foundation (GNOF) Next 100 Years Challenge



Selection of a contractor underway.

St. John the Baptist Parish was one of ten recipients selected for a \$100,000 award to continue advancing green infrastructure solutions in the Parish. This award is intended to pilot a green infrastructure project and expedite a larger funding proposal for a comprehensive green infrastructure strategy. A Request for Qualifications to select a contractor to design and construct the pilot project was released. A contractor should be selected by next month.

BRIC Direct Technical Assistance



FEMA

Agreement finalized with GOHSEP.

Planning & Zoning and Public Works are engaging with FEMA's Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) Direct Technical Assistance program to receive assistance with project prioritization and development to address flood risk. The Direct Technical Assistance team applied to fund a scoping study to evaluate the drainage issues along Highway 51 at I-10/I-55. In September, FEMA announced St. John's proposal had been awarded, and the agreement is now finalized with GOHSEP to begin the project. A Request for Proposals will be released to select a firm for engineering and design soon.

Manchac Greenway Master Plan



Grant agreement undergoing final approval.

St. John the Baptist Parish is seeking funding to develop and create a Master Plan for the Manchac Greenway through the U.S. Department of the Treasury's Resources and Ecosystems Sustainability, Tourist Opportunities, and Revived Economies of the Gulf Coast States (RESTORE) Act. The Greenway is located on old highway 51 and Hammond highway between Laplace and Ponchatoula. Greenways are land use tools that mix environmental protection with economic activity. In partnership with the Friends of the Manchac Greenway, the Master Plan will help St. John apply for and receive funding for projects related to ecosystem restoration, economic development, and tourism promotion. The Manchac Greenway will transform an underutilized part of the Parish into a model of sustainable land use for the region. The Parish is in the process of receiving final approval from the Treasury Department now.

Bayou Chevreuril Hydrologic Restoration



Project design is complete.

This restoration project will enhance approximately 1,880 acres through the hydrologic restoration of swampland between Bayou Chevreuril and the Vacherie Canal, where spoil banks have altered hydrology and increased flood stress on trees in the project area through impoundment. The construction of this project will transform this high flood stress area into a productive and resilient habitat, allowing it to persevere and regenerate on its own. Project design is complete, and the project is currently undergoing environmental permitting.



St. John
The Baptist Parish

Coastal and Water
Management