



FLOODWATCH

Educating, Planning, Protecting

The Official Newsletter of the Louisiana Floodplain Management Association

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December 2019



From the Director's Desk

By: *Theodore DeBaene, P.E., CFM Executive Director*



National Flood Insurance Policies

The Louisiana Floodplain Managers' Association has over 380 members, mostly grassroots members. Yet we have never been viewed as the authority in floodplain issues by our senators and congressional representatives. They don't know who we are. This is not right and we hope to change this exclusion.

It is not our intent to write legislation or to lobby for passage of a particular issue but only to provide our opinion on specific issues.

A major step in this concept is to let the politicians know who we are. Gary O'Neal has volunteered to lead this endeavor, but he needs your help. If you have a personal relationship or knowledge of your legislator let Gary know and he will arrange a meeting to explain how LFMA can assist the legislature in understanding the issues that come before them. All we want to accomplish is the knowledge of who we are and how we can assist.

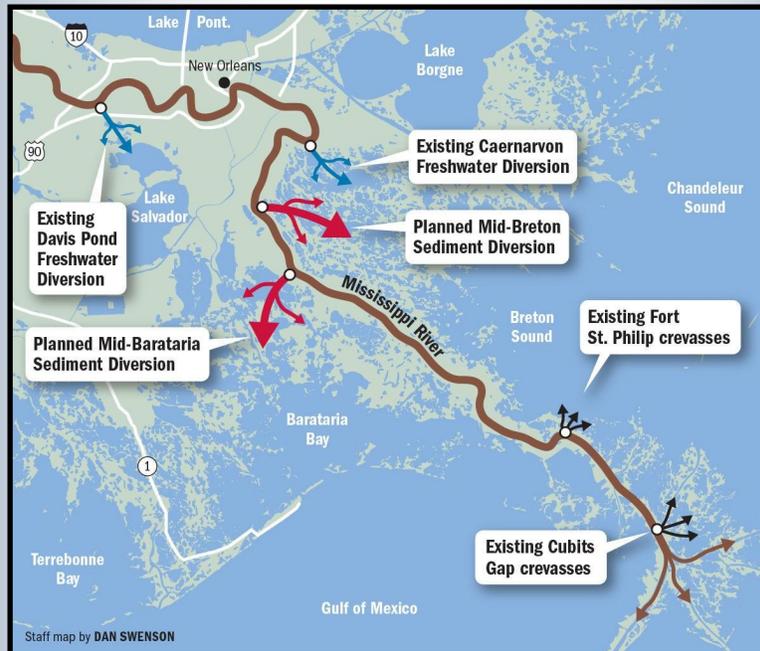
LFMA Fall Workshop

The fall workshop was held in West Monroe, LA in October and was a huge success! We had 23 attendees. Thanks to all who participated! Photo credits—Kim Reeves



Mississippi River diversions led to land loss, not growth, study says: Implications are 'obvious'

Submitted by Mitch McDonald



Two Mississippi River diversions created to reduce salinity levels in Breton Sound and the Barataria Basin, and a crevasse that cut through the river's east bank levee in Plaquemines Parish, actually caused the loss of more wetlands than they helped build, according to a new study led by LSU researchers.

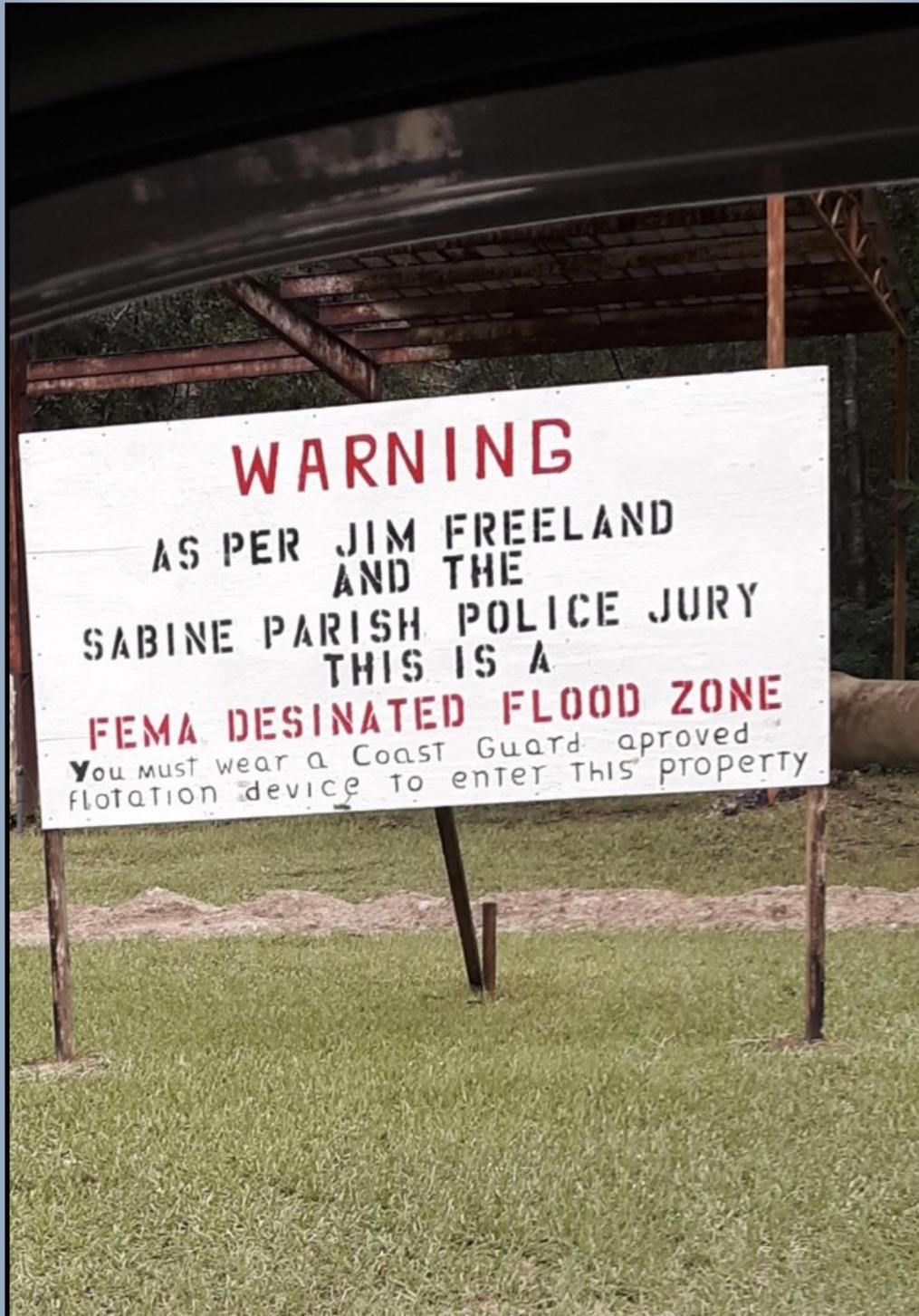
But experts caution that the study does not necessarily portend similar results for the two massive diversions planned along the lower Mississippi in the next few years — diversions designed with the specific goal of land-building.

Those new, much larger diversions — called the Mid-Barataria and Mid-Breton Sediment Diversion Projects — are slated to cost \$2.2 billion and are a major focus of Louisiana's effort to rebuild the state's rapidly eroding marshes.

Read the full story [here](#).

A Bit of Humor!

Submitted by Greg Lemoine



Could Water Management Be New Orleans' Next Big Export?

Submitted by Vicki Holmes

For years, Louisiana was the only state in the country to have a [master plan](#) for dealing with coastal land loss. Now other states, like [Texas](#), are following suit. Louisiana's motivation is clear: The state loses approximately a football-field's worth of land every hour. Louisiana's Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority estimates that, left unattended, the loss of the state's wetlands will worsen the annual cost of flood damage from an average of \$2.7 billion to approximately \$19.9 billion. Yet in the face of such dire predictions, some see an opportunity for southern Louisiana to position itself as a leader in water management and to reap the economic benefits of not only addressing the state's issues, but of selling that expertise to others.

This is the conclusion that economist Robert Hagans of The Data Center reached in his [study](#) released earlier this month. Hagans found that in the aftermath of 2005's Hurricane Katrina and the 2010 BP oil spill, the heavy construction industry grew, as firms rebuilt the city's broken levees and constructed [massive flood protection](#) systems. However, other industries associated with heavy construction have not necessarily fared as well. For example, engineering jobs didn't increase at the same rate.

Read the full story [here](#).



Mitigate Disaster Damage with FEMA Public Assistance

Build Back Better and Stronger with FEMA Public Assistance Mitigation

Following a federally-declared disaster, eligible state, local, tribal, and territorial governments can use FEMA Public Assistance (PA) funds to design and complete eligible mitigation projects that will protect public infrastructure from future similar damages.

PA 406 Mitigation funds mitigation measures in conjunction with the repair of the disaster-damaged facilities.

Completing mitigation projects during the recovery period reduces overall cost and construction efforts associated with retrofitting a repaired facility.



After a devastating flood in Binghamton, New York forced Lourdes Hospital to close for two weeks and caused \$20 million in facility damages, the hospital incorporated a floodwall through PA 406 Mitigation. Today, the floodwall activates when a flood is present, allowing the hospital to remain fully operational during flood events.

The FEMA PA 406 Mitigation Brochure can be found [here](#).

FEMA PrepTalks

PrepTalks are given by subject-matter experts and thought leaders to spread new ideas, spark conversation, and promote innovative leadership for the issues confronting emergency managers over the next 20 years. Each PrepTalk includes a video, discussion slides, and resources.

Last week, FEMA released Jan Peelen's PrepTalk ["Living with Water: How the Netherlands Prevents Flood Disasters."](#) Peelen tells the story of the Netherlands' historic battle with flooding and shares how the Dutch are learning to live with water.

As a representative of the Dutch Ministry for Infrastructure and Water Management at the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, Peelen advises U.S. entities on resilience, urban planning, and infrastructure and coordinates all water-related efforts of the Dutch diplomatic network in the U.S.

PrepTalks are a partnership between FEMA, the International Association of Emergency Managers, the National Emergency Management Association, the National Homeland Security Consortium, and the Naval Postgraduate School Center for Homeland Defense and Security.



PREPTalks
New perspectives for emergency managers

Coastal authority wants to use Maurepas Swamp diversion as mitigation for West Shore Lake Pontchartrain levee

Submitted by Vicki Holmes



The state Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority has asked the Army Corps of Engineers to use its proposed \$200 million Maurepas Swamp freshwater diversion project as the required environmental mitigation for a \$760 million levee project under construction in St. John the Baptist Parish.

If the Corps agrees, at least part of the diversion's cost could be counted against the state's 35 percent share of the cost of the new levee, called the West Shore Lake Pontchartrain project. The diversion, designed to benefit nearly 45,000 acres, or nearly 70 square miles, of cypress-tupelo freshwater swamp on the edges of Lake Maurepas, will cost far more than Louisiana needs to spend on mitigation to offset the effects of building the levee across wetlands in St. John Parish, so only a small part of its total cost could be used as an offset.

Read the rest of the story [here](#).

The Water Institute of the Gulf moving forward on Port Fourchon project

Submitted by Vicki Holmes

The Water Institute of the Gulf has received a \$500,000 grant through the National Coastal Resilience Fund to move forward with its Port Fourchon project.

The \$500,000 grant to the Institute will be leveraged with private funding from Chevron, Shell, Danos as well as the Greater Lafourche Port Commission to move forward with an initiative called the "Partnership for our Working Coast." The initiative involves dredging and upgrading the port, and then using the dredged materials for other coastal sustainability efforts.

The grant will specifically go toward the next phase of the initiative, where stakeholders will work with computer models to produce a preliminary project design.

The Institute estimates that about \$100 million in potential service work leaves the U.S. annually due to inadequate service capacity, which the dredging would improve. About 20 million cubic yards of material would be dredged during the project, of which 10-12 million cubic yards would be needed to expand the port and mitigate wetlands. The remaining 8-10 million yards of material would be free for coastal sustainability efforts.

Read a *Business Report* feature about the Port Fourchon project [here](#), and The Institute's announcement [here](#).

Source article: <https://www.businessreport.com/newsletters/the-water-institute-of-the-gulf-moving-forward-on-port-fourchon-project>

Jefferson Parish secures funding for 'living coastline' in Bucktown as work continues on boardwalk

Submitted by Vicki Holmes



Bucktown probably isn't the first place that comes to mind when you think of coastal restoration. In fact, Lake Pontchartrain probably isn't either.

But two projects underway just over the levee from the Metairie neighborhood aim to change that thinking and bolster flood protection and water quality along the lake's southern shoreline.

Crews are building a curved, 1,000-foot boardwalk just west of the Bucktown Harbor that will enclose a 3.5-acre patch of marshland created as part of the harbor in 2001.

That \$1.7 million project, funded by the parish and the Environmental Protection Agency, will include benches, bird-watching stands and educational signs for visitors, and will serve as an "outdoor classroom" for educators and other groups after its completion this spring.

Read the full story [here](#).

What it'll take to raise New Orleans-area levees: \$3.2 billion, 50-year plan, Corps says

Submitted by Vicki Holmes

The Army Corps of Engineers has recommended a \$3.2 billion, 50-year plan to elevate both the hurricane-protection levee systems on either side of the Mississippi River and several miles of river levees to keep pace with sinking soils and rising sea level.

In dual reports released Monday, the Corps said its plan, if pursued, would keep levees and floodwalls high enough to reduce flooding caused by storm surges resulting from hurricanes with a 1 percent chance of occurring in any year.

Protection from these so-called 100-year storms was the baseline standard the federal government agreed to provide in building New Orleans' new levee system after Hurricane Katrina.



Read the full story [here](#).

In Memoriam

Rodney W. Smith

December 16, 2019



Written by Wayne Berggren and Michael Hunnicutt

Wayne first met Rodney at an LFMA flood conference in 1987. For two years he thought Rodney was the “Other Brother Darrell” and really thought his name was Darrell. He didn’t talk a lot (if you believe that) and he never corrected Wayne for over two years. Finally, he told Wayne his name was Rodney Smith. From that time, they were friends. He started to talk more and Wayne found out that he liked to play golf. They both became part of a team of people that set up the wine and cheese parties for LFMA Conferences! With the LFMA credit card or a check from the organization in hand, they put on some of the best wine and cheese parties and hosted the best hospitality room events in the history of LFMA that money could buy, the sky was the limit, or whatever was in the bank account!

Kara Moree remembers her favorite Rodney LFMA conference memory. “It was one year at the “Technical Tour”, I got personal golf lessons and tips from Mr. Smith himself the entire time we were out on the course (whether I wanted to hear them or not, LOL). They were surprisingly very helpful tips and he was extremely patient with me while I fumbled around the course since I am definitely not the most experienced golfer. It turned out to be a really great time! I think we were at the course in Covington.

Michael first met Rodney in 1990. He was a local Floodplain Manager for Ouachita Parish in Louisiana and a member in the Louisiana Floodplain Management Association. He was a Past Chairman of LFMA and loved all the members as well as being very active in the organization. Rodney’s passion and knowledge of Floodplain Management is what led Michael and Wayne to hire him in 2007 and make him part of the FEMA HM team for the Louisiana Recovery Office. What a thrill and honor it was to work with local people that you knew for years and were given the privilege to support the Katrina recovery mission. Rodney was hired as the Lead Supervisor

In Memoriam, cont.

for Floodplain Management. It was a job that he cherished and was very good at it. He once told Wayne that it was the best job he ever had. Working with friends in his home state where he knew all of the towns and Permit/FP Managers. When Rodney believed in something or took a stand on an issue, he made his voice heard and did not back down. Over several disasters, Rodney was a Crew Leader for Substantial Damage Investigations, this was one of his specialties. He was also an excellent teacher and trainer for HM Programs and processes.

One day, while driving to Lake Charles for one of the Calcasieu and Cameron Parish visits, Michael and Wayne were lost on the back roads of Louisiana. Both knew that Rodney never got lost in Louisiana. In fact, they knew their only hope was to call Rodney and asked him for directions. He knew the State of Louisiana and all of its roads. After that, Michael and Wayne were joking in the car, "As long as we had Rodney to call for directions, who needed On-Star". We had a Rod-Star! That's why we changed On-Star to Rod-Star. That became his new nickname to everyone in the group.

In my opinion, he was one of the most knowledgeable Floodplain Managers that FEMA ever had. His will to work and to help communities follow their Flood Prevention Ordinance is what he always strived to do. Be in compliance was what he wanted for all NFIP participating communities. Rodney was my friend. He was my Brother. HE will be forever missed... From Wayne Berggren.

Being his friend for almost 30 years, and supervisor on and off several disasters over the past 13 years has been an interesting journey. He was working on a SD Project for us in the Oklahoma Disaster and doing an excellent job in documenting the information. We not only lost a valuable member of our FEMA Family, we also lost a really good friend. Rodney made friends easy, always left an impression on you, and cooked an awesome pot of Seafood Gumbo I would put up against any Five Star Restaurant. From Michael Hunnicutt

RodStar passed away in Tulsa while on deployment to Oklahoma on December 16, 2019. He is survived by his wife Kim, their two children and 7 grandchildren.



The Louisiana Floodplain Management Association extends its deepest sympathy to family, friends and colleagues on the passing of

RODNEY SMITH

December 16, 2019



May the almighty give rest and peace to his soul

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

LFMA 37th Annual Business and Technical Conference

Floodplain Management 2020—What's Your Vision?

April 15-17, 2020



Courtyard by Marriott

142 Library Drive

Houma, LA 70360

Conference Contact: Lisa Ledet

lisaledet@tpcg.org

985-873-6567

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

ASFPM's 44th Annual National Conference



See the countdown to conference timeline [here](#).

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