

Talk Before the Oyster Task Force September 6, 2019

Louisiana prides itself on being the greatest producer of oysters in the USA. Yet most Louisiana citizens don't realize that the CPRA Master Plan for protecting and restoring the coastal zone will result in the destruction of our oyster industry. The survival of our oyster industry depends on educating the public that this CPRA policy is wrong...that the destruction of the oyster industry is not a necessary cost of protecting and restoring the coastal zone.

If we say that the diversions are wrong, our solution must provide as much or more storm protection as the CPRA solution. This can occur if the diversions are redesigned to capture the freshwater and sediment behind levees as occurs in surge-reservoirs. Surge reservoirs receive and hold rising water and sediment during flood stage and release the water back into the river after the flood has passed. The levees of these redesigned diversions/reservoirs will prevent the destruction caused by the freshwater floods of the CPRA-style diversions and will protect the land being built inside the reservoirs from erosion by wind and waves.

A study led by Tulane University¹ says that 70% to 95% of the sediment delivered by CPRA-style diversions will be washed away by wind and waves. The increase in storm protection will be minimal. The sediment will be gone with the wind. On the other hand, the levees and enclosed wet-and dry-land being built by surge reservoirs will create "immediate" increases in storm protection. The citizens of Louisiana understand the difference: for the past 300 years, levees have been the preferred choice for flood protection.

The Oyster Task Force has the Constitutional mandate to lead the development of the oyster industry and provide a vision for its future. That vision should include the re-establishment and expansion of the oyster industry in southeastern Louisiana. To achieve this goal, southeastern Louisiana must be protected from freshwater floods. The salinity required for oyster production must be recreated and managed. This can be done by redefining existing diversions and by building additional dryland storm protection structures that also protect expanded oyster production zones. We can kill two birds with one stone.

Today, I suggest that the Task Force pass a motion to develop a Vision Statement and Development Plan. Here's my suggestion for your Vision Statement: **Redesign all freshwater diversions into southeastern Louisiana to focus on building dryland storm protection structures that also define and protect expanded oyster production zones.** The Task Force should back up its Vision Statement with a more detailed Development Plan, such as the draft Plan I have recently delivered to you. Next, I suggest the Task Force pass a motion to begin a public relations campaign to convince the public that Louisiana can have both: effective storm protection and an expanding oyster industry.

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¹ Researchers from Tulane University, Coastal Carolina University and The Water Institute of the Gulf found that unprotected diversion sites retain only 5 to 30 percent of incoming sediment.
<https://news.tulane.edu/pr/mississippi-mud-may-hold-hope-louisiana-coast>