



**S a v i n g P a r a d i s e**  
*Honoring Our Past, Protecting Our Future*



# S a v i n g P a r a d i s e



*Honoring Our Past, Protecting Our Future*

# Restoring Louisiana's Vanishing Wetlands

Coastal wetlands. Those unique areas that can't decide whether they want to be land or want to be water. Where nutrients abound and fish and wildlife teem at rates incomparable to other environments. To some, coastal wetlands are viewed as muddy, insect-laden, inhospitable places to be avoided at all costs. To others, these are highly productive

environments, abundant in natural resources to be managed and harvested. And to still others, coastal wetlands are magical worlds to be explored, appreciated, and enjoyed.

Whatever your view might be, it is undeniable that coastal wetlands perform highly important functions and provide highly valuable services. Water filtration, water storage, flood protection, critical habitat for fish and wildlife, recreational opportunities and the carbon sequestration



Photo by Diane Huhn

## Facts about Louisiana's Coastal Land Loss Crisis

- Coastal Louisiana has experienced a net decrease of 1,883 square miles of land between 1932 and 2010.<sup>1</sup>
- Over a four year period between 2004-2008, hurricanes Katrina, Rita, Gustav, and Ike transformed approximately 328 square miles of marsh to open water.<sup>2</sup>
- The land loss rates on the Louisiana coast have slowed from an average of more than 30 square miles per year between 1956 and 1978, to an estimated 16.75 square miles per year from 1985 to 2010. If this recent loss were to occur at a constant rate, it would equate to losing an area the size of a football field per hour.<sup>1</sup>
- An additional 1750 square miles of land is at risk of being lost in the next 50 years if nothing is done.<sup>3</sup>



Learn more about Louisiana's coastal crisis and what's being done to turn the tide.

are just some of the ways the quality of our daily lives is directly impacted by the quality and quantity of our coastal wetlands. This should be reason enough to work together to protect them.

Nowhere is this more evident than in the coastal regions of Louisiana. The coastal wetlands of this Gulf Coast state are inextricably tied to the history, culture and way of life for the two million residents that call it home. But it is a place and a people that are in jeopardy of being lost. While Louisiana is home to 40% of our nation's coastal wetlands in the lower 48 states, it is experiencing 80% of our annual wetland loss.



Photo by Diane Huhn



## *Enhance your understanding*

### **Quick Response Codes**

*You will find a number of QR codes throughout this booklet. A QR code is a type of bar code designed for use with smart phones and other devices that contain cameras. Scanning these codes will take you to websites and other online information. To take advantage of these QR codes, you'll need to make sure that you have a QR reader app installed on your device.*

# WHAT'S AT



# STAKE?

## CULTURE

Louisiana's coastal wetlands have played an integral role in shaping a unique and treasured culture and heritage unlike any in the world. A rich and varied mix of cultural groups from all over the globe helped to create an unparalleled and distinctive blend of music, food, and way of life. Not only do the residents of Louisiana value this ongoing cultural legacy, but millions of visitors do as well. In 2012 alone, 26.3 million people visited the state, spending \$10.7 billion.<sup>4</sup>

## FISHERIES

The economic impact of Louisiana's commercial and recreational fishing industries cannot be overstated. Contributing approximately \$3.5 billion to the state's economy and sustaining more than 40,000 jobs, not only is the fishing industry directly tied to the culture and heritage born of the coastal wetlands, it is an economic engine to be appreciated and cultivated.<sup>5</sup> Perhaps no other industry in Louisiana is so dependent on the health of our coastal wetlands.

## HABITAT

Deltas, and the estuaries they create, are highly productive and highly valuable habitats. Louisiana's coastal wetlands teem with hundreds of species of aquatic and terrestrial wildlife. It is a critical flyway for migratory birds and provides critical habitat for many endangered and threatened species. It is the intersection of the habitat, the resources it provides, and the people that call it home that make coastal Louisiana so special and the reason it is so important to preserve, conserve, and restore for all inhabitants.

## INDUSTRY

The Louisiana coast is a working coast and is home to critical and extensive energy and navigation infrastructure. With five of the top fifteen national shipping ports found within its borders, the waters of Louisiana handle about one-fifth of all waterborne commerce in the United States, making the state a vital intermediary for foreign and domestic trade.<sup>6</sup> In addition, more than 80% of the state's offshore oil and gas is produced off Louisiana's coast, and 25% of the nation's foreign and domestic oil comes ashore on Louisiana roads and waterways.<sup>7</sup>

## STORM PROTECTION

Louisiana's coastal wetlands provide important natural buffer zones from tropical storms, hurricanes, and other natural and manmade disasters. Healthy wetlands can provide the vital function of reducing storm energy and storm-generated water surges that cause flooding. As Louisiana's wetlands disappear, communities and businesses are becoming exposed and vulnerable to disaster. Coastal restoration can ultimately ensure protected communities, vibrant industries, and a thriving ecosystem.

## WATER QUALITY & AGRICULTURE

The Mississippi River watershed terminates in Louisiana's coastal zone, bringing with it nutrient-rich runoff from 31 states and two Canadian provinces. Today, levees channel most of this runoff into the Gulf of Mexico. Before the levees were built, however, Louisiana's wetlands filtered many of these sediments and nutrients, converting them into biologically useful materials. For generations, Louisiana's coastal zone has provided a wonderful place to grow sugar cane, rice and citrus; graze cattle, harvest crawfish and alligator; and grow a multitude of other produce.





Buddy Daisy, Photo by Lane Lefort

## I Remember...

In the spring of 2012, the Outreach Team for the Coastal Wetlands Planning, Protection, and Restoration Act (CWPPRA) embarked on a project not only to honor eleven dedicated stewards of the Louisiana wetlands but also to encourage a new generation of coastal caretakers to enter the world of habitat protection and preservation. By combining oral histories, environmental portraits, and other works illustrating the distinctive chronicles and memoirs of the people who have used Louisiana wetlands as their home and environment, the “I Remember” project is providing a unique and creative pathway to one of CWPPRA’s overarching goals: engaging citizens of coastal communities in protecting and restoring the critical coastal wetland habitats upon which they depend upon.

## SHARED VISION

As time passes and environments change and ways of life evolve, it is important to document these histories. Not just to record an interesting and colorful history, but to learn and appreciate and effect change. In south Louisiana, documenting our past can serve as a motivating force for why we should continue to work hard to save our coast. Bayou Grace and CWPPRA are dedicated to this shared vision.



## Why Should We Save Coastal Louisiana?

In the fall of 2010, Bayou Grace Community Services launched a coastal land loss awareness project. Participants were asked to document why they personally felt it was important to save coastal Louisiana and were photographed with their response.

Over the next three years, more than one thousand photographs have been collected and featured in a variety of mediums to help raise awareness about Louisiana's coastal crisis. The goal of this ongoing project is to inspire ordinary, everyday citizens from around the nation and the world to restore and exercise good stewardship for the coastal wetlands of not only Louisiana, but of the threatened environments that we all depend on everywhere.

### SHARED COMMITMENT

It seemed a natural fit to bring together these two unique, powerful, and complimentary projects. Just as there are many stories to tell and reasons to work for restoration, there are many



avenues to spur people to action. We hope the stories, messages, and images in this book will inspire you to begin, or continue, a journey of working on behalf of our coastal wetlands and the fish, wildlife, and people that depend on them.



## We are the Wetlands

**E**arly settlers of the Louisiana wetlands must have undoubtedly faced a harsh and challenging environment in which to build their communities. But an amazing and unique culture was born of their tenacity. The culture of south Louisiana is as tied to and dependent on the wetlands as are the livelihoods of those that call it home. Even the passage of time is not measured by the standard of winter, spring, summer, and fall, but rather by the seasons of the wetland bounty...shrimp season, oyster season, alligator season, duck season, trapping season, crab season, crawfish season, and so on.

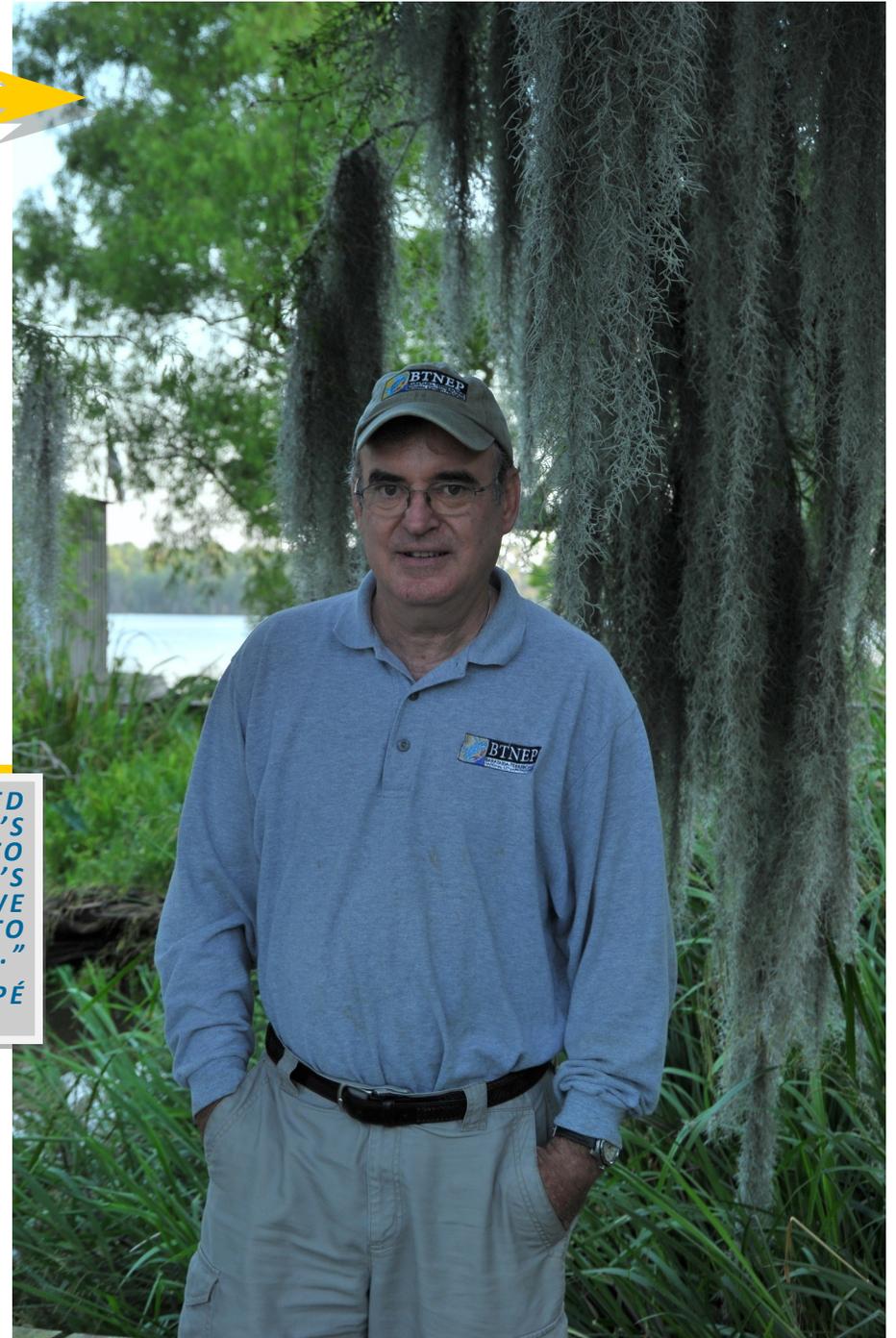
The rhythm of a life tied to the rhythm of nature is something very special. It's a way of life that gets in your blood. It's a way of life that should be treasured, preserved, and passed on to generations to come.

**"WE HAVE THIS RICH MIXTURE OF CULTURES INTERTWINED AND THAT'S THE THING THAT MAKES THIS PLACE UNIQUE. IT'S BECAUSE OF THE WETLANDS. THAT'S WHY PEOPLE LIKE TO COME HERE AND THAT'S WHY PEOPLE LIKE TO STAY. SO IT'S ALL ABOUT THE WETLANDS. THE WETLANDS ARE US AND WE ARE THE WETLANDS AND THAT'S WHY IT'S SO IMPORTANT TO SAVE."**

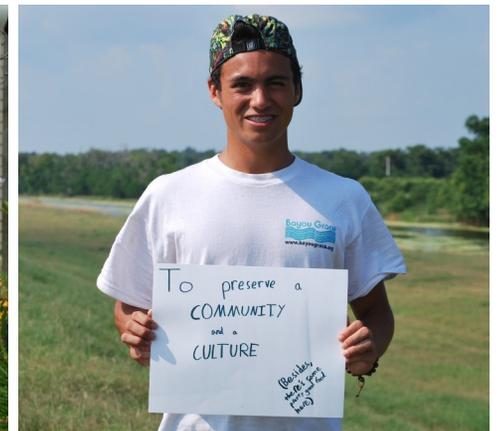
**KERRY ST. PÉ**



*Aware of the ongoing connections between man and nature, Louisiana wetland conservation is an innate way of life for Kerry St. Pé, Director of the Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary Program.*



Kerry St. Pé, Photo by Lane Lefort





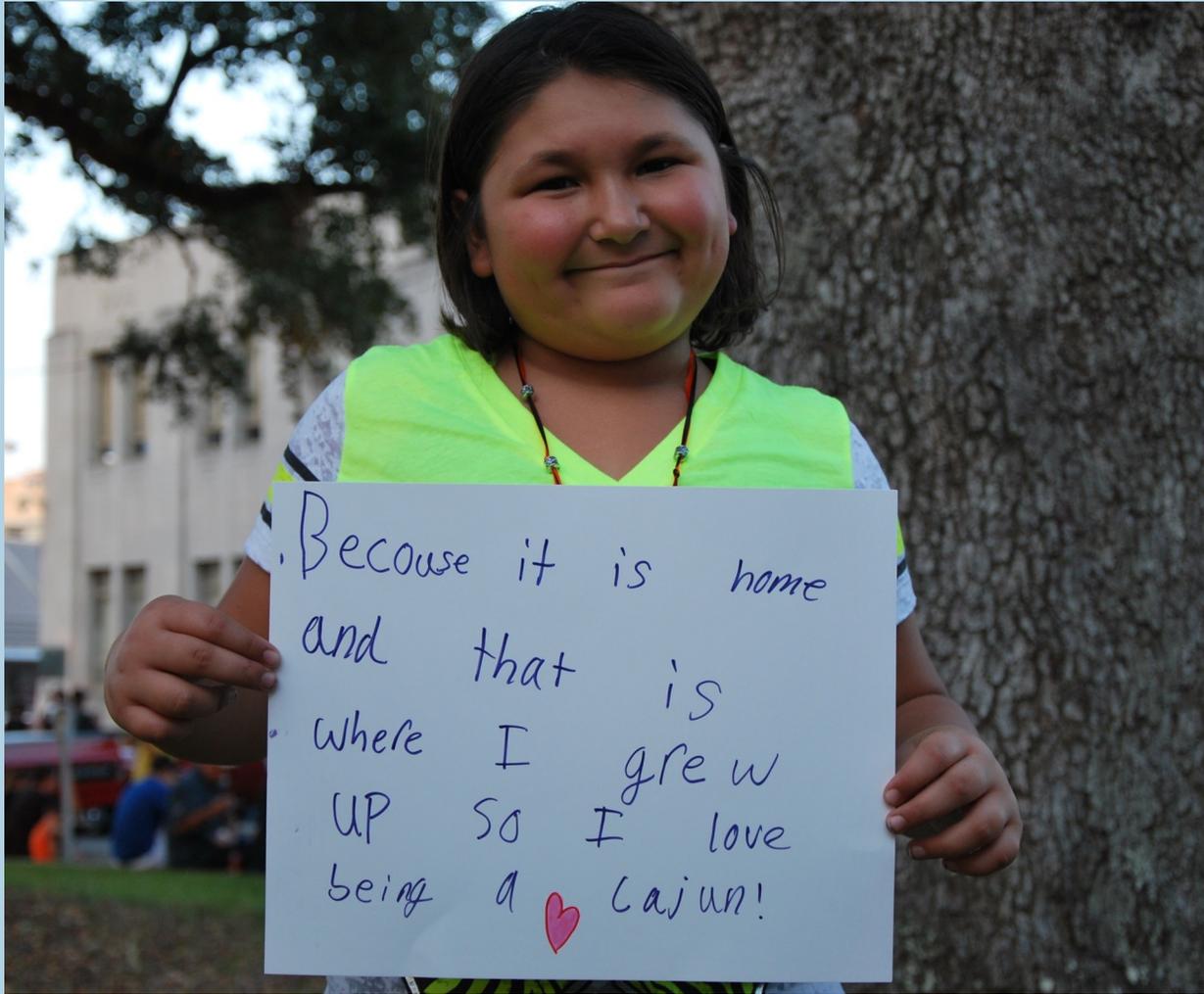
*"IF HEAVEN WOULD BE THAT GOOD, I DON'T MIND. THAT WAS THE BEST. WHENEVER I GET OUT TRAWLING, IT MAKES ME FEEL JUST SO WONDERFUL."*

EDDIE SAPIA, JR.



As a retired shrimper, this interview gives a first-hand look at how life in the Louisiana wetlands have changed over one lifetime.





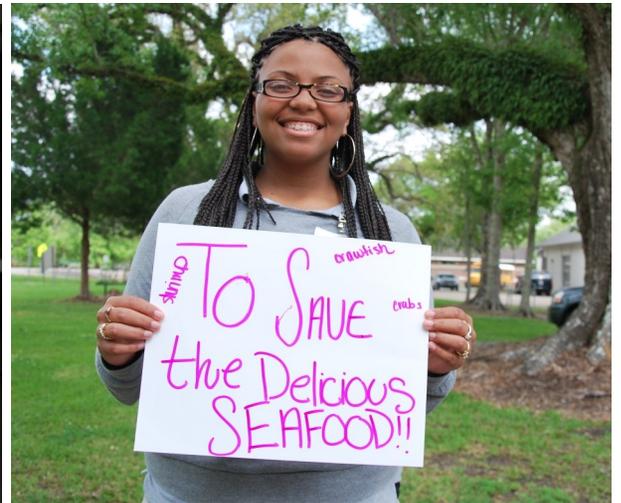
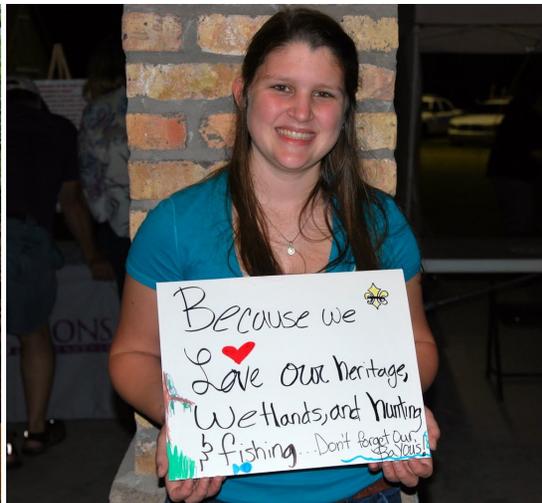
Yancy Welch, Photo by Lane Lefort

*"SO MANY FLAGS HAVE FLEW OVER US AND WE HAVE CHANGED SO MUCH. I GOT FRIENDS THAT ARE BOUDREAUX'S AND THIBODEAUX'S. WE GOT MILLER'S THAT ARE GERMANS. WE GOT NUNEZ'S THAT ARE SPANISH. YOU KNOW, IT'S SO MANY DIFFERENT CULTURES. THEY GOT SOME NAMES BACK HERE THAT WE CAN'T PRONOUNCE 'EM."*

**YANCY WELCH**



*Having survived repeated hurricanes, this crabber and alligator hunter shows great respect for Louisiana's distinctive ecosystem.*





*“AND WETLANDS ARE INCREDIBLY PRODUCTIVE. THEY’RE ONE OF THE MOST PRODUCTIVE ECOLOGICAL SYSTEMS ON THE PLANET AND PRESERVING IT IS NOT ONLY AN ECONOMIC TREASURE, IT’S A CULTURAL AND HISTORICAL TREASURE.”*

EARL MELANCON

*“YOUR GULF IS LAPPING AT YOUR DOORS NOW. AND IT’S TIME TO STOP IT, TIME TO CHANGE IT.”*

BUDDY DAISY



*This dynamic duo weaves the tale of harvesting and studying oysters in Louisiana, and sharing the need for ongoing restoration efforts.*



Earl Melancon and Buddy Daisy, Photo by Lane Lefort

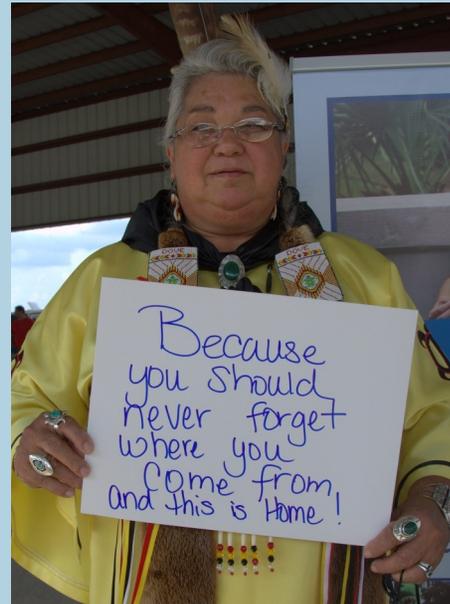


# Leaving a Legacy

Photo by Diane Huhn

**E**very generation hopes to leave the next with a better environment, more opportunities, and the hope of a more prosperous life than they had. Unfortunately, Louisiana's coastal crisis puts such aspirations in question. While the future of living life in the Louisiana wetlands is uncertain, hope remains strong. Restoration projects such as those implemented through CWPPRA and other local, state, and national agencies and organizations have helped restore, protect, and preserve tens of thousands of acres of Louisiana's coastal wetlands. Numerous projects are in the works or currently under construction, and many additional projects are being planned for the future.

Will these projects be enough to ensure that future generations can call coastal Louisiana home? Only time will tell. Therefore, it is as important now as it ever has been to continue cultivating a legacy of environmental stewardship. This is especially important among our young people because if we are going to truly make a difference in the long-term sustainability of coastal Louisiana, restoration of the coast will take decades and require a populace with the will to see it through.



Marietta Smith-Greene Photo by Lane Lefort

**"AND NOW IT'S MY LEGACY. IT'S A WONDERFUL LEGACY TO HAVE."**

**MARIETTA SMITH-GREENE**



For this resident, Louisiana coastal restoration includes everyone from family to federal legislative delegates.

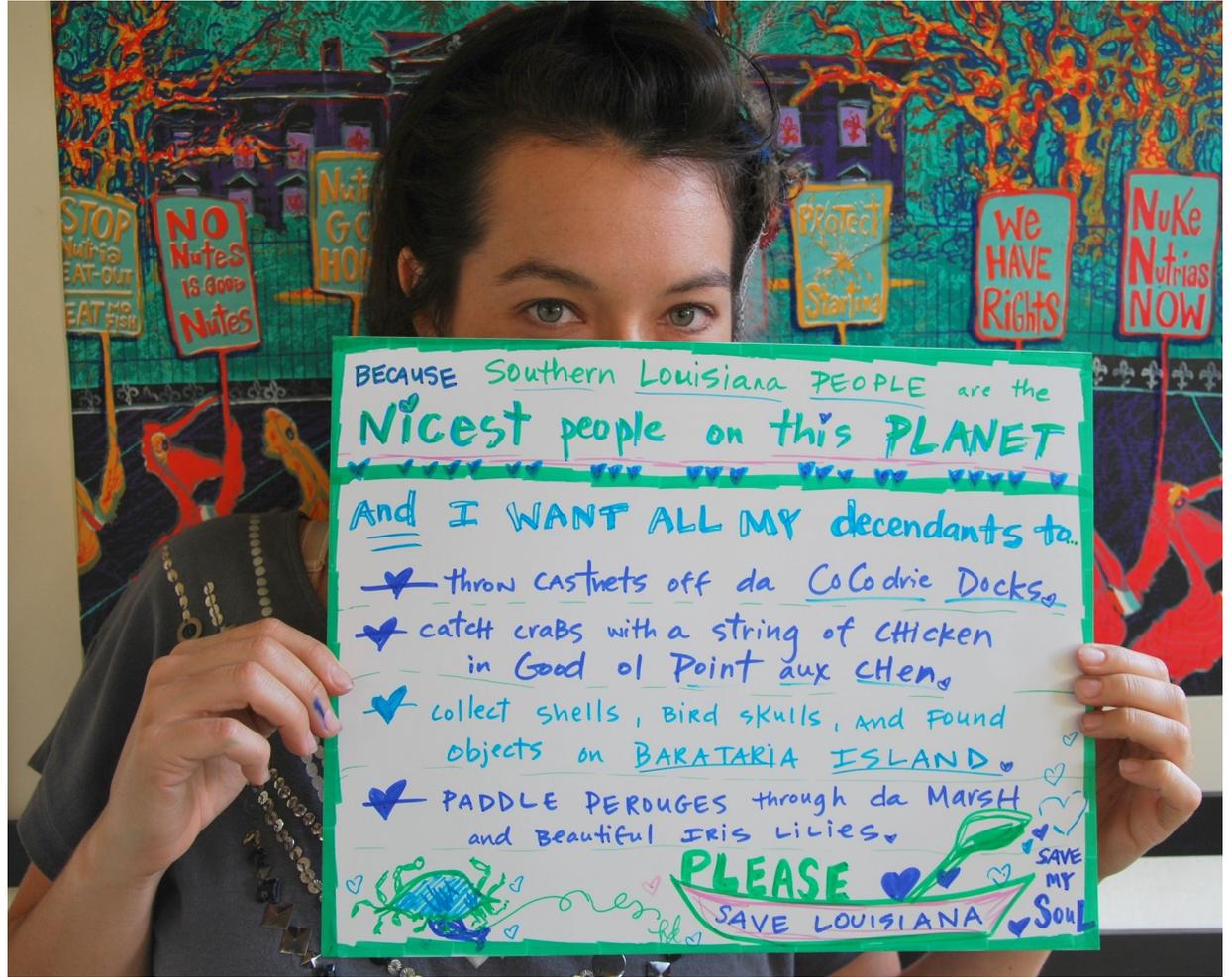


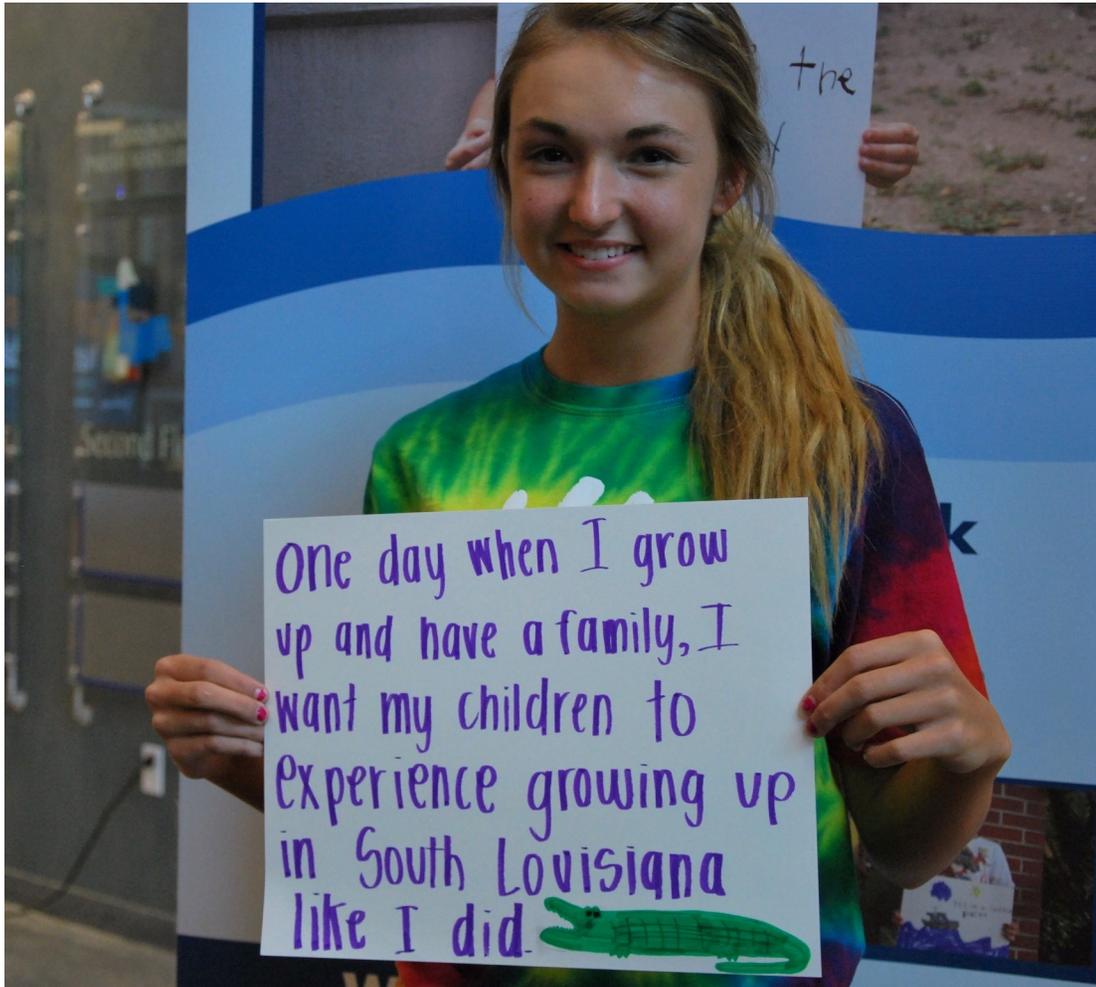
*" RESPECT THAT WE'RE ALL CONNECTED,  
THAT ONE GENERATION IS CONNECTED  
TO THE NEXT."*

SUSAN LAUDEMAN



Living in New Orleans  
and being devoted to  
wetlands is a natural  
match for Sue  
Laudeman.





Brenda Dardar Robichaux, Photo by Lane Lefort

*"AND SO NOW IT'S A CALL TO ACTION...DON'T LET US BECOME SOMETHING YOU'RE READING ABOUT IN THE HISTORY BOOKS...HELP US TO MAKE SURE WE CAN MAINTAIN OUR CULTURAL IDENTITY, THAT WE CAN MAINTAIN OUR COMMUNITIES FOR AS LONG AS POSSIBLE SO THAT WAY OUR CHILDREN CAN GROW UP TO ENJOY THE BEAUTY THAT WE GREW UP WITH."*

BRENDA DARDAR-ROBICHAUX



*Dardar-Robichaux tells the story of how Louisiana's disappearing wetlands have a dire effect on the United Houma Nation.*

# Get Involved

Just as it took strong determination and hard work to carve vibrant towns and cities out of the Louisiana wetlands, it will take strong determination and hard work to ensure their survival. Our coastal communities cannot be saved by scientists and engineers alone, nor by governments alone, nor by community members or volunteers alone. The job of saving our coast is a job that must be shared by everyone who has a stake in its survival. Considering the critical resources and services provided by the coast of Louisiana to the whole United States, that group of stakeholders includes each and every citizen of our great nation.

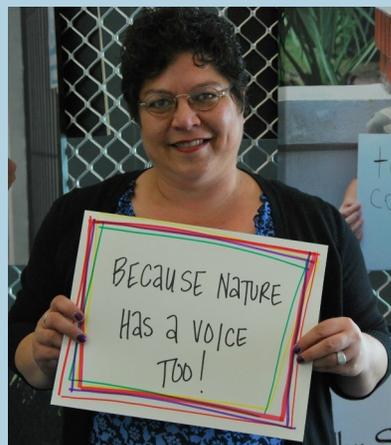
Whether you call Chauvin home or Chicago home, whether you harvest oysters or corn, or whether you get your dinner out of the bayou or from your local grocery store, we are all dependent on Mother Nature for our survival. So each one of us must be a steward of our environment. We hope that the stories of our featured coastal caretakers and the messages from ordinary citizens

about the importance of saving coastal Louisiana might serve as inspiration to get involved. Just as we need our coastal wetlands, they need us. Be their voice!

*Learn more about ways to get involved to make a difference for our coastal wetlands.*



Photo by Diane Huhn



Davie Breaux, Photo by Lane Lefort

*"SO, WHY WOULDN'T YOU WORK TOGETHER IN BUILDING A PROJECT THAT WOULD REBUILD SOME WETLANDS, PROTECT INDUSTRY AS WELL AS GIVE SOME NEW ENVIRONMENT FOR NATURE?"*

DAVIE BREAUX



*A lifetime of wetland use goes far beyond a job for Breaux, it is a lifestyle to be saved for generations to come.*

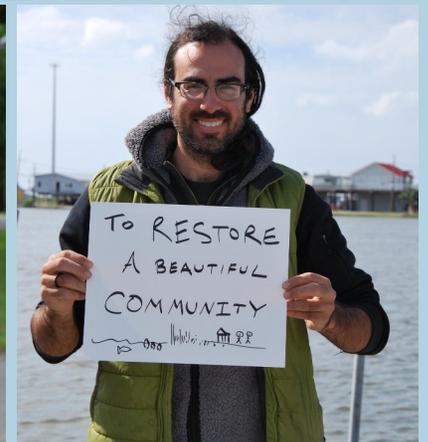
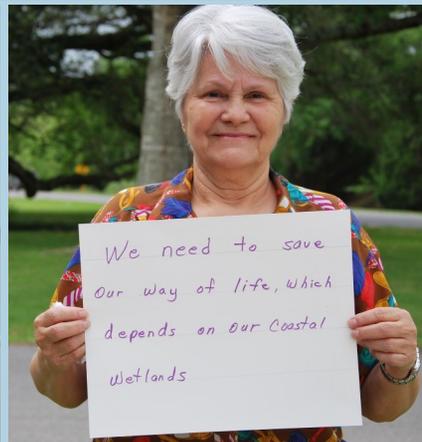


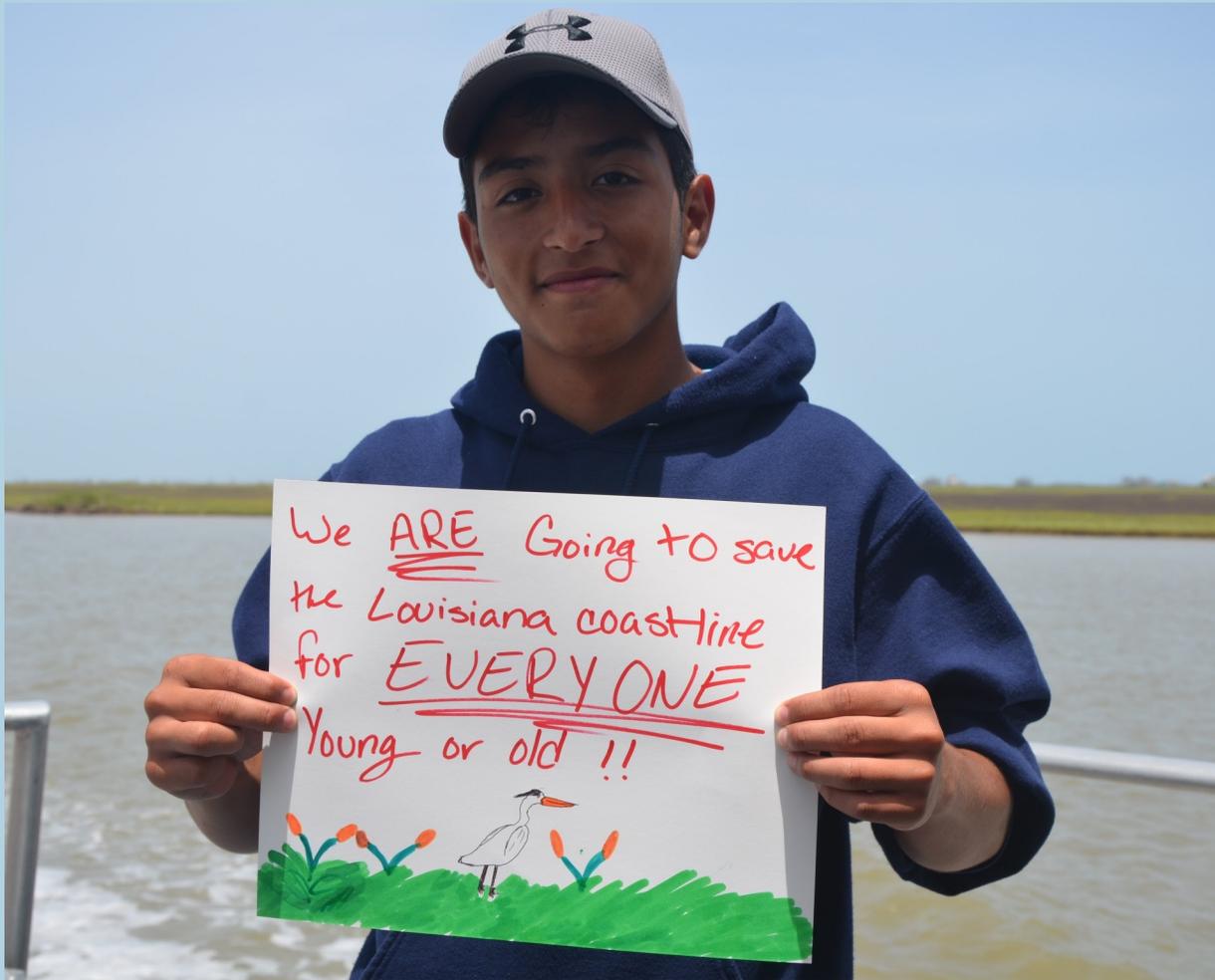
**"IT'S WORTH EVERY DIME SPENT TO RESTORE THE COAST, DEFINITELY, I WOULD NEVER ADVISE FUTURE GENERATIONS TO RECEDE. DO SOMETHING TO KEEP IT STABLE."**

**CINDY CUTRERA**



As a mother, employee, and resident, wetland restoration is an important part of Cutrera's everyday life.





Sherrill Sagrera, Photo by Lane Lefort

*"WE JUST NEED TO TELL PEOPLE TO GET INVOLVED. AND WHETHER THEY GET INVOLVED THROUGH CWPPRA OR INVOLVED THROUGH ANY KIND OF LEGISLATION THAT'S COMING THROUGH THAT'S GOING TO HELP LOUISIANA, THEY NEED TO BE INVOLVED."*

**SHERRILL SAGRERA**

*Landowner, farmer, and wetlands crusader, Sagrera continues to educate people about the dangers of letting Louisiana's wetlands slip away.*



# 10 THINGS YOU CAN DO FOR THE COAST



## Educate yourself about coastal restoration.

Learn all you can about restoration efforts across our coast and share your knowledge with others whenever you have the opportunity.



## Attend a public meeting.

There are many agencies and organizations involved in coastal restoration efforts. Learn about these groups and attend any public meetings they may have.



## Influence change in your community.

Let your public officials know that you have an opinion about coastal Louisiana and coastal restoration efforts.



## Volunteer.

There are many organizations working for coastal restoration that could use your help. Familiarize yourself with these groups and volunteer your time to support their efforts.



## Reduce energy consumption.

Reduce your carbon footprint to reduce the demand for fossil fuels. Share energy saving ideas with friends and family.

## Keep the environment clean.

Get out and enjoy our wonderful and amazing coastal environment, but be sure to leave no trace of the time you spend there.



## Become a citizen monitor.

Many organizations working to monitor the health of our environment need help and have citizen monitoring programs. Find one and get actively involved.



## Join a conservation organization.

Numerous organizations are dedicated to preserving and conserving our environment. Join one and get involved.



## Travel the waterways responsibly.

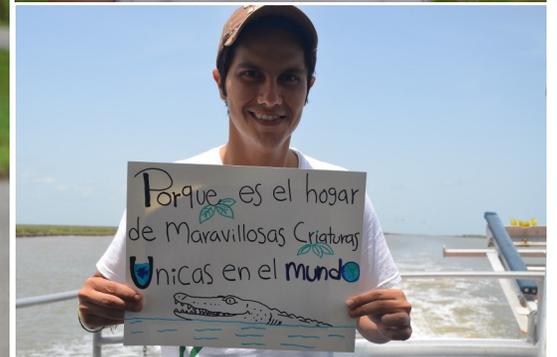
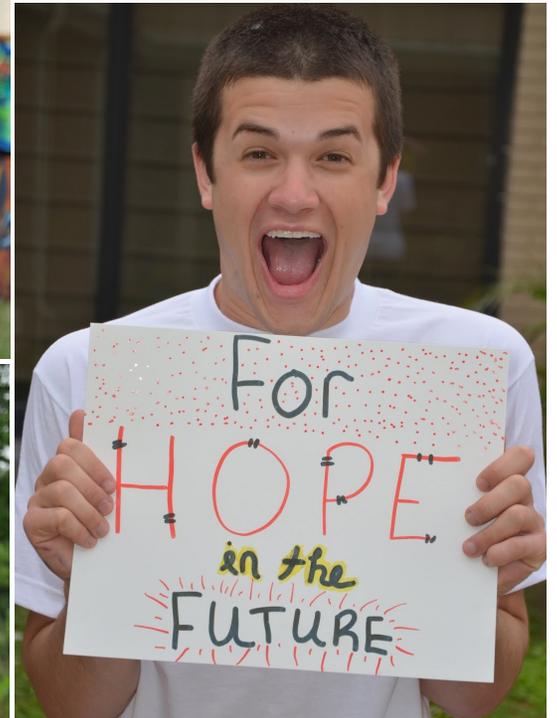
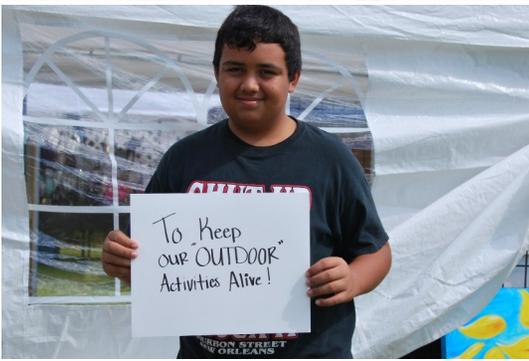
Wave energy from boats can cause erosion in some areas. Always follow posted no wake zones and other rules of the waterways.



## Show your support.

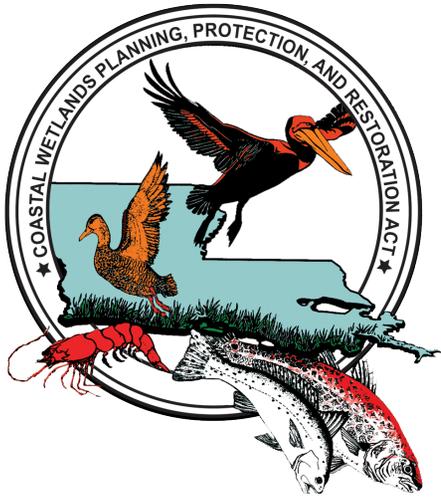
Many organizations are working hard everyday to restore our coast. Plan to engage a trustworthy organization to make a big difference for our coast.





## Bayou Grace Community Services

Bayou Grace provides hope and sustainability through coastal restoration and protection by addressing the most critical and immediate needs of the residents of the 5 Bayous in Lower Terrebonne Parish, LA to give renewed strength to the community and to mobilize residents in advocacy for the environmental health of their communities.



## The Coastal Wetlands, Planning, Protection and Restoration Act

The Coastal Wetlands Planning, Protection and Restoration Act, (CWPPRA pronounced kwĭp-rŭh), is federal legislation enacted in 1990 that is designed to identify, prepare, and fund construction of coastal wetlands restoration projects. Since its inception, 150 coastal restoration or protection projects have been authorized, benefitting over 112,000 acres in Louisiana. The legislation (Public Law 101-646, Title III CWPPRA) was approved by the U.S. Congress and signed into law by former President George H. W. Bush.

The annual budget for CWPPRA funded restoration has varied through the nearly twenty-year life span of the Act. The budget has ranged between approximately \$30 million per year to nearly \$80 million per year. The funded Louisiana projects provide for the long-term conservation of wetlands and dependent fish and wildlife populations with cost-effective plans for creating, restoring, protecting, or enhancing coastal wetlands.

## References

- <sup>1</sup>Couvillion, B.R., J. A. Barras, G. D. Steyer, W. Sleavin William, M. Fisher, H. Beck, N. Trahan, B. Griffin, and D. Heckman. 2011. Land Area Change in Coastal Louisiana from 1932 to 2010: U.S. Geological Survey Scientific Investigations Map 3164, scale 1:265,000, 12 p. Pamphlet. [http://pubs.usgs.gov/sim/3164/downloads/SIM3164\\_Pamphlet.pdf](http://pubs.usgs.gov/sim/3164/downloads/SIM3164_Pamphlet.pdf).
- <sup>2</sup>Barras, J.A. 2009. Land Area Change and Overview of Hurricane Impacts in Coastal Louisiana, 2004-08: U.S. Geological Survey Scientific Investigations Map 3080, Scale 1:250,000, 6 p. Pamphlet, <http://pubs.usgs.gov/sim/3080/>.
- <sup>3</sup>Louisiana's Comprehensive Master Plan for a Sustainable Coast, p. 18, 2012.
- <sup>4</sup>Louisiana Tourism Forecast 2013-2016. Prepared for: Louisiana Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism by University of New Orleans Hospitality Research Center. April, 2013
- <sup>5</sup>Southwick Associates. 1997. The economic benefits of fisheries, wildlife and boating resources in the state of Louisiana. Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries.
- <sup>6</sup>Waterborne Commerce of the United States. Compiled under the supervision of the Institute for Water Resources, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Alexandria, Virginia, 2005
- <sup>7</sup>Waldemar S. Nelson and Company, Inc. 2002. Louisiana Coastal Area Restoration Feasibility Study economic linkages literature review. Nelson Project No. 20010052. A report to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, New Orleans District and the Louisiana Department of Natural Resources.

## Acknowledgements

We would like to offer our sincere gratitude to the many individuals and organizations that have made this publication possible. Thank you to Bayou Grace Community Services and the Coastal Wetlands Planning, Protection, and Restoration Act (CWPPRA) community for taking on this project in their efforts to continue to raise awareness of the critical need to restore and protect our beloved Louisiana coastal wetlands. Thank you to the CWPPRA Task Force and Public Outreach Committee for their ongoing support of the “I Remember: Environmental Portraits and Oral Histories of Louisiana’s Coastal Wetlands Stakeholders” project and for their encouragement to make this publication a reality.

Coastal Louisiana is full of vibrant and interesting individuals dedicated to conserving the environment and preserving the culture, and we are eternally grateful to the following coastal stewards for sharing their stories with us: Davie Breaux, Cindy Cutrera, Buddy Daisy, Brenda Dardar-Robichaux, Susan "Sue" Laudeman, Earl Melancon, Kerry St. Pé, Sherrill Sagrera, Eddie Sapia, Jr., Marietta Smith-Greene, and Yancy Welch. Special thanks to Cole Ruckstuhl, Taylor Suir, and Kathy Ladner with CWPPRA and Jennifer Abraham Cramer with the T. Harry Williams Oral History Center at the Louisiana State University for their assistance in preserving these wonderful stories for generations to come.

Coastal Louisiana is also full of truly beautiful scenery and places, and we are sincerely grateful to Lane Lefort for capturing that beauty through the lens of his camera on a daily basis and for graciously allowing us to feature one of those images on our cover as for his beautiful portraits of our featured coastal stewards.

A very big thank you to the more than one thousand individuals from around the globe who were willing to answer a simple question and share their love of coastal Louisiana with the world.

A very special thank you to Susan Testroet-Bergeron and Diane Huhn for always working hard to create new and unique ways to engage the public in an issue near and dear to their hearts, the restoration and protection of coastal Louisiana for generations to come. Diane Huhn’s creative spirit lives in this document. She has an uncanny way of inspiring people to tell their bold stories on one sheet of paper. We are thankful that she has spent countless hours capturing both the faces and messages in their honesty and splendor. Diane's and Susan's vision and dedication brought life to these two powerful projects, and we hope these images and stories continue to inspire others to get involved.



## Bayou Grace Community Services

### The Coastal Wetlands, Planning, Protection and Restoration Act

