

East New Orleans Neighborhood Advisory Commission | National Wildlife Federation | Lower Ninth Ward Center for Sustainable Engagement & Development | Gulf Restoration Network | Deep South Center For Environmental Justice | MQVN Community Development Corporation | VAYLA | Orleans Audubon Society | Village de l'Est Improvement Association | Delta Chapter of the Sierra Club

8/13/18

LETTER TO LOUISIANA DELEGATION MEMBERS FROM SUPPORTERS OF THE BAYOU SAUVAGE PROJECT

Dear Senators Cassidy and Kennedy, Representatives Scalise, Richmond, and Graves:

We are writing to encourage you to take advantage of a current opportunity to improve the Bayou Sauvage Urban National Wildlife Refuge in east New Orleans. We thank you for your letter of support to Secretary Zinke regarding this opportunity and are now writing to ask that you make action on the current Bayou Sauvage opportunity a priority for 2018.

Bayou Sauvage is one of the few remaining areas of coastal wetlands in Louisiana that can be easily accessible to millions of citizens and visitors to Louisiana and Mississippi, as well as from around our nation. Today, access to the Refuge is through a circuitous route to a remote entry point on the south side of the Refuge. There is no welcome center, only an open structure and kiosk offering few recreational and educational amenities.

The opportunity exists today to purchase the 2500 acre Little Pine Island tract of land that would complete the western portion of the Refuge. Conserving these wetlands will complement local flood protection projects by absorbing billions of gallons of water. The Little Pine Island tract includes traditional freshwater wetlands, a lagoon and a 2000 year old Indian mound, all of which easily could be accessed from an exit to Interstate 10. This new tract, coupled with three or four acres at an exit from Interstate 10, which bisects the Refuge without providing access, would provide easy access to the Refuge and expanded recreational opportunities. One of the owners of the Little Pine Island tract is prepared to donate the three or four acres of land on the I10 exit that could be the site of a welcome center, parking facility, recreational concessions and educational amenities. The expanded Refuge would offer hunting, fishing, canoeing, kayaking, bird watching, alligator watching and educational opportunities to the millions of citizens of Louisiana and Mississippi. The development of a visitor access facility at the Michoud exit from I-10 could help spur economic development in an area of the city hard hit by Hurricane Katrina flooding, but which has nevertheless seen one of the most determined efforts at recovery led by citizens.

The purchase of this tract of land together with the donated land at the I10 exit and the development of a welcome center on that property would achieve the long term goals of the Refuge as contained in the 2009 Conservation Plan for the Refuge. These actions would also achieve the two major objectives of the current Administration with regard to federal lands managed by the Department of the Interior: improved access and recreational opportunities. All of these improvements to the Refuge can be achieved in 2018. We stand ready to assist in the efforts to make Bayou Sauvage the crown jewel of the national urban refuge system. We are attaching a letter we recently wrote to Secretary Zinke encouraging him to act on these current opportunities at Bayou Sauvage.

Thank you for your attention to this request and we look forward to working with you to achieve these much needed improvements to the Bayou Sauvage National Urban Wildlife Refuge.

Sincerely,

[sent by e-mail and post]

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