The Louisiana Conservation Partnership Strategic Plan

A Commitment For A Productive Louisiana In Harmony With A Quality Environment
Foreword

Louisiana by anyone’s measure has surely been blessed with an abundance of natural resources. Rich, fertile soil, bountiful croplands, abundant forests and grasslands, rivers, bayous, lakes, wetlands, and coastal marshes make up our environment that is so pleasingly enjoyable, yet so easy to take for granted. Stop and ask people on the street if they are concerned about the land—its water and its wildlife—all would have a definite and positive comment. For over sixty years soil and water conservation districts—local organizations led by local people—have tried to care for the land by working with their neighbors. They have formed partnerships with other state and federal agencies to bring the best available assistance possible to the people who use the land, but must protect and respect it.

The overall partnership is known as the Louisiana Conservation Partnership. It is made up of landowners and people from organizations, local soil and water conservation districts, Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry—Office of Soil and Water, U.S. Department of Agriculture—Natural Resources Conservation Service and other USDA agencies, universities, state natural resource conservation agencies and groups.

This plan is an attempt by the Louisiana Conservation Partnership to refocus and recommit its energy, resources, and programs to strategically address the myriad of concerns and needs of our state’s resources. This strategic plan is the result of an inclusive process of involving conservation leaders in its development. Obviously there were many who could not be involved for one reason or another, but this strategic plan is open and dynamic. While it is intended to give us focus and direction for the next five years or so, there are many people, organizations and agencies that can help the partnership refine or expand its goals and develop tactical action plans that will truly protect and conserve our lands.

If you would like to be a part of this effort, we welcome your participation. The Louisiana Conservation Partnership is all inclusive. Conservation of our natural resources is for the good of all of us, but it will take all of us as partners to make it happen.

A satellite imagery mosaic obtained from Advanced Very High Resolution Radiometer sensors at one kilometer resolution, July 1991. Red represents forests and cropland, while blue/green represents grasses or other native vegetation. Data obtained from U.S. Geological Survey processed by National Cartography and Geospatial Center, Fort Worth, Texas.
Louisiana’s Forestlands—A Strategic Issue

The Louisiana Conservation Partnership will enhance the productivity and sustainability of forest resources in the state by:

- Increasing the production of wood products on private land
- Working with landowners to promote forest management practices such as thinning, proper timing of clear cutting and tree planting on barren land
- Working with landowners to reduce erosion and the acreage of barren ground
- Promoting stewardship and conservation of forests and grasslands

The Goals of the Conservation Partnership:

- Assist landowners on private non-industrial forest land apply conservation treatment on 100,000 acres of forestland
- Increase the acreage of bottomland hardwoods by 150,000 acres
- Provide management and marketing information and opportunities to 5 percent of unformed groups and absentee landowners
- Help to increase wood production and wood by-products on private, non-industrial forestland by 5 percent
- Promote Best Management Practices on forestlands
- Expand and enhance partnerships with the forest industry

The Desired Results...

- Increased production of wood and wood by-products on private lands
- Best use of sound resource management techniques in forestry
- Sustainable forestry initiatives implemented
- Increased acreage of bottomland hardwoods on marginal croplands
- Increased forest management plans and marketing awareness of unformed groups, individuals and absentee landowners

Louisiana has about 14 million acres of forests—almost one-half of Louisiana’s land area!
Louisiana's Cropland--A Strategic Issue

The Louisiana Conservation Partnership will enhance the productivity and sustainability of cropland resources in the state by:

• Working together to protect productive cropland from conversions to non-cropland uses
• Working with producers to increase the production of food and fiber crops to optimize economic yields
• Supporting agricultural research to identify sustainable tillage and cropping systems which are agronomically and economically feasible
• Assisting producers in applying site-specific cropland Best Management Practices

The Goals of the Conservation Partnership:

• Voluntary application of site-specific Best Management Practices on all cropland
• Assist producers in applying conservation tillage systems on two million acres of land
• Increase the acreage of cropland planted to cover and green manure crops to enhance soil health and quality
• Assist producers in applying cropping systems which result in healthy, sustainable soil conditions
• Strengthened commitment to research, development, and application of conservation practices

Louisiana has about 6 million acres of cropland.

The Desired Results...

• A highly productive cropland resource base
• Maximum economic production of food and fiber
• Voluntary application of site-specific Best Management Practices
• Sustainable cropping systems and tillage practices
• Reduced erosion
• Improved soil health

Louisiana's Wetlands--A Strategic Issue

The Louisiana Conservation Partnership will restore, enhance, and protect wetlands by:

• Working to restore coastal and upland wetland ecosystems
• Assist in efforts to reduce erosion along Louisiana’s coastline and loss of coastal wetlands
• Minimizing the loss of wetlands throughout the state
• Reducing pollution and drainage of wetlands

The Goals of the Conservation Partnership:

• Reduce annual rate of coastal wetland loss by 20 percent
• Restore upland wetland ecosystems on 100,000 acres
• Expand the use and restoration of wetlands for flood damage reduction and improved water quality by 150,000 acres
• Restore 150,000 acres of coastal wetland ecosystems

The Desired Results...

• Reduced loss of coastal wetlands
• Increased acreage of wetlands
• Improved water quality
• Improved and increased wildlife habitat
• Reduced flood damages
• Improved fisheries habitat

A third of all species of birds, 190 species of amphibians, and all of America’s wild ducks and geese depend on wetlands for their survival!
Louisiana's Social and Economic Well Being--A Strategic Issue

The Louisiana Conservation Partnership will enhance social and economic well-being through rural economic development and environmental efforts by:

- Assisting in efforts to maintain rural communities and an economically strong family farming industry and a quality environment
- Sustaining a majority of private economically-viable family farms
- Supporting locally-led natural resource conservation activities
- Seeking funding to achieve desired conservation results or outcomes
- Increasing public awareness of conservation issues and negative impacts of illegal dumps and litter
- Working to instill pride in the people of this state
- Assisting in efforts to reduce litter and trash along highways and other areas
- Helping to restore run-down areas, remove abandoned houses, and clean up unkempt areas
- Working to designate additional historic districts
- Helping community leaders, towns and cities install more landscaped areas
- Cooperating with landowners to plant trees in cut-over forest areas
- Educating the public about natural resource conservation issues
- Working to achieve a high-quality environment for Louisiana
- Seeking strong political support for the conservation and development of the state's natural resources
- Strengthening the cooperative union of landowners and the Louisiana Conservation Partnership

The Goals of the Conservation Partnership:

- Sustain a majority of the presently private economically-viable family farms
- Increase the participation of diverse groups in conservation work and increase technical assistance to those groups by 20 percent
- Identify and prioritize local natural resource issues
- Assist others to decrease the number of litter and illegal dump sites in rural areas by 10 percent

The Desired Results...

- A strong family-farm industry and other family-owned businesses in the state
- Improved economic conditions in poverty-stricken areas
- Reduced litter and illegal dump sites in Louisiana
- Expanded conservation efforts to diverse groups
- A union of the citizenry working cooperatively to accomplish the vision of the Louisiana Conservation Partnership
- Viable rural communities

People working together through partnerships can achieve great success in the improvement of the social and economic well being of this state.

Louisiana's Soils--A Strategic Issue

The Louisiana Conservation Partnership will protect and enhance the productivity of soil resources for future generations by:

- Working to reduce soil erosion
- Assisting land users apply Best Management Practices
- Helping to increase the acres of conservation tillage
- Helping to increase the number of producers using nutrient and pesticide management practices
- Reducing erosion and subsequent sediment deposition whereby soil quality is enhanced
- Assisting landowners to plant more cover crops and grasses on barren land to reduce soil erosion

The Goals of the Conservation Partnership:

- Reduce sheet, rill, and gully erosion on agriculture lands by 10 percent
- Convert all soils Information
- Modernize 10 percent of the soil surveys in the state
- Enhance utility of parish soil surveys by converting data to digital formats

The Desired Results...

- Higher agriculture and forestry productivity through improved soil quality
- Reduced soil erosion
- Improved water quality through improved soil management
- Decreased flooding as a result of reduced sediment loads
- Reduced sediment deposition impacting wildlife and fisheries habitat
- Expanded use of digital soil survey products

There are more than 300 different types of soil in Louisiana!
Louisiana's Grazing Lands--A Strategic Issue

The Louisiana Conservation Partnership will maintain or improve grazing land resources by:

- Promoting a voluntary delivery system of technical assistance on grazing lands
- Encouraging voluntary diversification of grazing lands operations to achieve multiple natural resource benefits
- Increasing public awareness of the multitude of benefits that society receives from properly managed grazing lands
- Fostering partnerships that promote land stewardship through the Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative

The Goals of the Conservation Partnership:

- Increase quality technical assistance as well as timely delivery to users of grazing lands by 40 percent
- Grazing land operators incorporate plans for multiple land uses on grazing lands
- Improve the utilization and management of ag-generated wastes (organic matter and nutrients) by 50 percent on grazing lands
- Plan and apply grazing systems on 30 percent of Louisiana’s grazing lands
- Strengthen research that will assist users of grazing lands in managing their grazing lands for the benefit of all natural resources

The Desired Results...

- Increased sustainability of grazing lands resources
- Improved economic viability of grazing lands operations
- Increased usage and adoption of grazing lands management technology by livestock producers and other users of grazing lands
- Increased numbers of grazing land users that diversify their operations for improved economic and ecological viability
- Improved water quality
- Reduced gully, sheet, rill, and streambank erosion

There are about 8 million acres of grazing lands in Louisiana.

Louisiana's Water Resources--A Strategic Issue

Using watershed management, the Louisiana Conservation Partnership will protect and improve water resources by:

- Working with others so that every water body is suitable for fishing, swimming, and water recreation—solicit assistance for stewardship from all sectors of society
- Working with individuals and companies to decrease or eliminate chemicals, ag wastes and sediments being deposited or dumped into surface water bodies
- Assisting to clean rivers, bayous, and streams so all water is fishable, swimmable, and drinkable
- Working with others to reduce water quality impairments so all water bodies in Louisiana meet the designated use
- Assisting in reducing erosion on all lands including construction sites and highway rights-of-way
- Utilizing a program-neutral approach that includes federal and state programs to achieve watershed protection and enhancement
- Enhancing the productivity of rural communities and rural economies through flood protection and water management

The Goals of the Conservation Partnership:

- Improve water quality in state designated areas by accelerating technical assistance—applying Best Management Practices in the areas
- Resource management systems incorporate Best Management Practices for conservation and improvement of water quality on 200,000 acres
- Utilize natural functions of floodplains and wetlands for improving water quality and reducing flood damages
- Utilize vegetated filters for waterways, turn rows, and buffer areas
- Assist local communities to reduce losses from flooding
- Watershed management to decrease pollution of the Gulf of Mexico

The Desired Results...

- Water quality that meets state standards for designated uses
- Adequate quantity of water for agricultural and other uses
- Watersheds adequately treated and managed for conservation, purity and protection of water resources

Louisiana has about 3 million acres of surface water.
Louisiana's Air Quality--A Strategic Issue
The Conservation Partnership will protect and enhance air quality through volunteer efforts and landowner cooperation and will work to expand green areas—tree and plant growth—in as many areas of the state as possible.

The Goals of the Conservation Partnership:
- All burning for conservation work and management purposes incorporates smoke management considerations
- All poultry producers have acceptable waste management systems
- Increase conservation practices, including conservation tillage, on agricultural lands by 20 percent for reduction of dust and carbon sequestration
- Livestock producers install systems to optimize production while minimizing odors, dust, and smoke
- Dairy producers install zero-discharge management systems

The Desired Result...
- Improved air quality by reducing dust, smoke, odors, and other air pollutants

Louisiana's Wildlife Habitat Quality--A Strategic Issue
The Conservation Partnership will work with landowners, local, state and federal agencies and groups to produce abundant wildlife by improving and enhancing wildlife habitat state-wide through cooperation and volunteer efforts.

The Goals of the Conservation Partnership:
- Landowners convert 150,000 acres of marginal cropland to bottomland hardwood forests
- Increase revenues 15 percent by expanding available recreational wildlife leases and eco-tourism on private lands.
- Increase migratory waterfowl habitat by 3 percent on privately-owned uplands
- Increase acres managed for wildlife benefits by 10 percent

The Desired Results...
- Greater numbers and diversity of wildlife species
- Increased area of wildlife habitat areas
- Improved quality of land-plant communities and water
- Increased revenue opportunities for private landowners through recreational activities
- Increased awareness of wildlife habitat through information and education
- Restored riparian areas
For more information on the Louisiana Conservation Partnership, contact the Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry, Office of Soil and Water, Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

"America's farmers, ranchers, and woodlot owners work hard to produce multiple benefits from the land. If our Nation and those landowners are willing to partner together, we in the Natural Resources Conservation Service believe that America's private land, along with public land, can become our Nation's real geography of hope."

Paul W. Johnson
Chief
USDA—Natural Resources Conservation Service

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