April 15, 2020

Senator Patrick Page Cortez  
President of the Senate  
P.O. Box 94183  
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

Representative Clay Schexnayder  
Speaker of the House  
State Capitol Building  
P.O. Box 94062  
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

Dear Honorable Ladies and Gentlemen of the Louisiana Legislature:

We write today, as religious leaders, concerning sustainable funding for the Coastal Master Plan. Most of the current funding comes from one-time dollars originating from the Deepwater Horizon disaster, and from offshore revenue sharing from the Gulf of Mexico Energy Securities Act (GOMESA). Very few dollars come directly from the state’s annual budget. As it now stands, we will not have nearly enough funding to carry out the State’s critical plan to restore our coast. **As stewards of God’s creation and the legacy we will be leaving for future generations who might wish to call this beautiful state home, the time to plan ahead is now.**

We pray the Legislature will signal to Washington, D.C. and the world that we are prioritizing coastal restoration by identifying and securing funding sources that will carry us into the future. When we have invested our own dollars in restoration, we increase our credibility and the likelihood of future federal investment. Both are needed for sustainable coastal restoration.

Some other major reasons to plan now for future investment of Louisiana tax dollars include the following points:

- For the next 3 years, the Coastal Program is slated to spend about $1 billion per year on this crisis.
- Most of the money will be spent on construction of long-awaited projects to build lost lands. These projects will have positive impacts on local economies.
- Nearly all of the funding comes from sources outside of the state’s annual budget.
- Recurring annual funding from the state’s mineral revenues to the Coastal Trust Fund account for only 1-2% of the nearly 1 billion dollars in planned spending in the coming years for this work: the rest comes from federal funding, disaster funds, and offshore revenues.
- The state’s share of the cost of saving our coast should be dramatically increased to show Louisiana’s commitment to its coastal area. Legislation will no doubt be required. If the discussion doesn’t start soon, oil spill dollars will wind down and Louisiana will fall short of what it will need to continue the necessary work to protect its communities, culture and wildlife.

As a new Legislature, we hope you will recognize that the Coastal Master Plan has been, to date, one of the only true non-partisan efforts in our state. It is only through this non-partisan approach that we have begun to address the existential crisis that threatens the Louisiana we love. With such resolve and commitment to spend precious tax dollars on our future, we can have a positive economic impact through coastal restoration. Together, we can restore ecological balance, create economic opportunities for recreational and commercial enterprises, and care for creation.

Faithfully yours,

Rev. Fred Devall  
Episcopal Diocese of Louisiana  
River Ridge
George D. Bond, II  
Junior Warden  
St. George’s Episcopal Church  
New Orleans

Rev. Joseph Clavijo  
The Bishop’s Environmental Commission  
Episcopal Diocese of Louisiana  
New Orleans

Rev. Dr. Seamus P. Doyle  
Episcopal Diocese of Louisiana  
Kenner

The Very Rev. AJ Heine  
Priest  
Episcopal Diocese of Louisiana  
Metairie

Rev. Deacon Charmaine Kathmann  
All Saints Episcopal Church  
River Ridge

The Rev’d Canon John Kellogg  
St. Mark’s Episcopal Church  
Harvey

Rev. Susan LaSalle  
United Church of Christ  
River Ridge

John Morris  
St. George’s Episcopal Church  
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Mike Robertshaw  
First Grace United Methodist Church  
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The Rt. Rev’d Morris Kind Thompson, Jr.  
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Rev. Duane Wiggin-Nettles  
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The Rev. Jay Angerer  
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All Saints Episcopal Church  
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Shawn Moses Anglim  
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