

The 2015 Louisiana Governor's Race
WHAT THE CANDIDATES ARE SAYING ABOUT COASTAL RESTORATION
Part 2– Implementing Large Projects Using Science

About the Coastal Issues Forum

Coastal restoration is one of the most important issues facing our state. To learn how our next governor plans to deal with the challenges and opportunities related to coastal land loss, the Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana and [27 partner groups](#) sponsored a Coastal Candidate Forum on August 18, 2015 at Nicholls State University in Thibodaux, La. The full 90-minute forum was rebroadcast on [five television and six radio stations across the state](#) and is [available for streaming online](#). Participating in the forum were all four gubernatorial candidates: Public Service Commissioner Scott Angelle, Lieutenant Governor Jay Dardenne, State Representative John Bel Edwards and U.S. Senator David Vitter. Excerpts from the forum are provided only for the two final candidates, Rep. Edwards and Sen. Vitter.

Question from Allyson Marcel, Nicholls State University student:

“As a young Louisianian thinking of my future here in coastal Louisiana, I am encouraged that the state has a comprehensive science-based coastal plan. I understand that our next governor will preside over a period of ambitious implementation – a period in which we’ll be moving into the tougher challenges – from the straightforward, simpler projects to some large, complicated, phased projects.

“As governor, how would you ensure that important, larger and more complicated projects that are critical to success, according to the science, are implemented without delay?”

Rep. John Bel Edwards Responds:

“Unfortunately, the largest, most important, most complicated projects are the ones that are the most controversial. It is the fear of the unknown, the adverse impacts on the ecology, the estuaries, fisheries, vegetation, on the economy and jobs, in short, on our way of life. And people in Louisiana are passionate about these things and they should be. But that’s why this is going to require real leadership that is present and engaged leadership from the front. It’s going to require an all hands on deck approach and those are the things that I will do as governor: ...a willingness to expend the political capital necessary to ensure success, insisting always on a transparent and open process with public input, and [using] a cost benefit analysis with an emphasis on the socio-economic impact of these projects. And I think it would help if we move forward with these projects to restore the coast, along with mitigation projects, to make sure that we maximize the benefit, and minimize the harm, and we reduce opposition to these projects. And we have to have a leader, and I will be this leader to clearly articulate the worst thing we could do is just maintain the status quo... We have to move forward as money becomes available and we have to do it by following the science. And this includes adaptive science so that as we complete one project we see what the results are from our observations and we make changes going forward to make sure that we are always improving and applying the best possible science. And we need to create science-based Centers of Excellence in our universities, partnering with The Water Institute of the Gulf... [W]e have top-notch scientists here in Louisiana. We need to take advantage of them and make sure they are studying things that have real impact here in Louisiana going forward.”

U.S. Senator Vitter Responds:

“Great question...I’m very encouraged by [the] new generation of Louisianans. You know, ultimately this question, I think, focuses on leadership and demands leadership. And I would do three things specifically and exhibit three specific brands of leadership that would get big, important, more complicated kind of projects done. First of all, as I said at a key part of our plan *Louisiana Together Strong* in terms of coastal restoration, is to take from the Coastal Master Plan 3-5 major, significant projects and put them on steroids, accelerate them, demand that we are making progress and breaking ground within a few years. And a key part of the leadership, I think I just exhibited, is saying that, committing to that, making it part of a written plan, and asking you to hold me accountable. I think that’s a key part of the getting it done. Secondly, I would make sure everything we do in the Coastal Master Plan, executing the Coastal Master Plan, is and remains science-based. Not politics-based. We’re pretty good in Louisiana at making things politics-based. That would be disastrous. I’m not very good at that. I’m not very good at political BS and I will keep us on a science-based track. And third, I would be very hands-on, particularly on those 3-5 key projects, meeting regularly, demanding that we are making progress, answering tough questions, just as I have been hands on with key core projects here in the area, working at the federal level. You can ask local leaders like Dwayne Bourgeois, Windell Curole, and Simone [Maloz] and Reggie Dupre over in Terrebonne. So I’d exhibit that type of leadership too.”

For more information about the Coastal Issues Forum, contact:

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