

The 2015 Louisiana Governor's Race
WHAT THE CANDIDATES ARE SAYING ABOUT COASTAL RESTORATION
Part 4 – Growing the Economy through Coastal Restoration

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 final two candidates, Rep. Edwards and Sen. Vitter.

Question from Pierre Connor, CRCL Board Chair and President and Head of Sales, Research and Trading, Capital One Securities:

“Coastal restoration means sustainable economic prosperity, if not economic growth, for Louisiana. Not only is restoration activity critical to protecting the infrastructure that supports current activity on our working coast. It will also offer potential for us to create and strengthen a new ‘restoration economy’ as we invest billions of dollars in complex, large-scale and highly technical projects. Opportunities abound for government and private sector to work synergistically to build the capacity of our state in research and work force development and through public-private partnerships, throughout Louisiana and beyond.

“As governor, what would you do to ensure we take full advantage of this opportunity? How would you incentivize innovation in coastal restoration and protection efforts in a way that accelerates progress restoring our coast?”

Rep. John Bel Edwards Responds:

“Every crisis presents an opportunity, and coastal erosion is no different. Real, tangible, and lasting benefits on a huge scale – other than the restoration of our coast, which is extremely important – are ours for the taking in terms of economic investment, development, job creation, enhanced state and local revenues to meet the needs of our people. But to make this happen, we’ve got to maximize the cooperation that the state has with various partners, including local government and private landowners, so that there can be cooperation in these master plan projects with private industries through private and public partnerships [and] also with higher education, so that we create Centers of Excellence at our universities with enhanced funding tied to research and practical application. We need to expand Fast Start, which is an award-winning program with cooperation between the Department of Economic Development, the Workforce Commission of higher education and private industry, to identify the jobs in demand and deliver the education and training necessary for our people to be successful.”

U.S. Senator Vitter Responds:

“I love the premise of this question. It’s right and sort of similar to the enormous expertise and technology we have built right here in the bayous of Louisiana and the oil and gas sector. We don’t just use them here. We don’t just employ people here. People take that knowledge and expertise all around the country...to all around the world to the North Sea and Africa. And we have that same opportunity to build a big sector of our economy around water resources – a restoration economy, if you will. To do that, I think we need partnerships, including with higher ed[ucation] – and we’re doing that, but we need to go further. For example is right here on campus at Nicholls State, the plant materials program and the biology department build those partnerships. But secondly, to do that, we can’t just study; we need to do. We need to put spades in the ground. We need to get things done. If we just study, we’ll maximize the number of published papers – the problem is, we won’t have a coast.”

For more information about the Coastal Issues Forum, Contact:

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