



Senator David Vitter's Answers to Restore the Mississippi River Delta Campaign Coalition and Coastal Builders Coalition

Letter Dated November 9, 2015

- 1) The FY 2016 Coastal Annual Plan suggests the payment of the 30-year payback scheme, structured by Governor Jindal to repay the \$1.8 billion debt, should be requested from the Capital Outlay budget each year. Do you feel that is an appropriate funding stream? If not, we would like to hear your thoughts on exactly how this debt may be paid.**

Yes, I believe it is an appropriate funding stream, but I am open to examining other means of retiring the debt service, including advocating Congress to forgive the debt as they have done in the past with FEMA disaster loans. What I won't do is rob Peter to pay Paul by cannibalizing current and future coastal protection and restoration dollars, even if those funds could be used to retire the debt. My family and I live within the greater New Orleans hurricane protection system and are appreciative for the protection it affords us and hundreds of thousands of Louisianians, but we cannot afford to let this debt cripple efforts to restore and protect our diminishing coastline. It's unfortunate that Governor Jindal kicked the can down the road to the next administration by deferring this payment when mechanisms were in place giving him authority to make payments before construction was completed.¹

- 2) Given the tremendous backlog of projects in the Coastal Master Plan, and the \$50 billion price tag – that some economists estimate to be nearer to \$100 billion – do you believe the state should invest more in coastal funding, and are you willing to advocate for additional state coastal dollars during your term? As Governor, where would you suggest these dollars be found?**

We should absolutely be investing more in coastal funding. Louisiana's coast is one of America's greatest natural treasures and one of the most productive ecosystems in the world. Our coast contains 40% of our nation's wetlands, which provides critical habitat to numerous species of wildlife, migratory birds, fish, and shellfish. Equally

¹ Deferred Payment Agreements between the Department of the Army and the Louisiana Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority for West Bank and Vicinity, Lake Pontchartrain and Vicinity, and Southeast Louisiana projects, January 16, 2009

important is the fact that our coast is a “working coast” and the foundation of Louisiana’s economy. It supports employment opportunities across several business sectors – energy, maritime, industrial, and fisheries – so Louisianians can provide for their families. Louisiana’s coast is also the #1 reason our state is called the “Sportsman’s Paradise.” Our bayous, wetlands, and coastal waters are home to world-class fishing and hunting. Whether employment or enjoyment, our coast is the lifeblood of Louisiana and its restoration is critical for the survival of Louisiana’s economy and culture.

We have all the tangible tools to effectively execute our coastal restoration efforts now and for generations to come, but what we need, in addition to sustainable funding, is leadership to aggressively push those efforts forward for a resilient coastal ecosystem.

And as your Governor, I will bring that leadership – strong, hands-on leadership – and start putting shovels in the ground on major coastal ecosystem restoration projects. In order to take steps to fully implement the Coastal Master Plan, I will immediately work towards three specific proposals. I will –

- 1) Lead a coalition of Governors, including from Alaska, Virginia, the Carolinas, Georgia, and the Gulf Coast, to push the feds to expand and accelerate offshore leasing and revenue sharing, producing more American energy and revenue for both the federal government and producing states.
- 2) Bridge the gap between wetlands mitigation and the Coastal Master Plan. We need to push mandated mitigation where it’s need the most – our coast.

In order to do this, we have to strengthen our state’s In-Lieu Fee program, which is essentially the state’s mitigation bank.

I was instrumental in pushing the Corps to approve the state’s current in-lieu fee program, but we need to greatly expand the program and include proposed mitigation projects in the Coastal Master Plan or have them complement existing ecosystem restoration projects.

- 3) Develop an aggressive, organized campaign to raise substantial private matching funds from energy and other leading businesses and non-governmental organizations, which would serve as lead sponsors of specific ecosystem restoration projects in the Coastal Master Plan.

We must encourage those businesses or organizations that call Louisiana home or do business here to compliment the state’s investment in ecosystem restoration projects along our coastal landscape.

Finding additional revenue sources to fully implement the Coastal Master Plan takes strong leadership, and as your Governor, I will be a leader who is hands-on and aggressively push to protect the money we have and find the money we will need.

Thank you, and God Bless Louisiana.