

# Louisiana Natural Resources News & 2008 Symposium Announcement

Newsletter of the Louisiana Association of Professional Biologists  
July, 2008

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## From the Editor

As you can see, this newsletter is noticeably shorter than usual. The first reason for that is we needed to quickly get out the Symposium announcement so you can all make plans to attend. The second is that we're lacking material to include from our members. Undoubtedly, many of you are working on projects/initiatives that would be valuable for our readership to be informed of. With that said, I would encourage you to send me materials for inclusion in the next newsletter to [mpiero1@lsu.edu](mailto:mpiero1@lsu.edu). I look forward to receiving your articles and getting them out to the rest of our members.

## 2008 LAPB FALL SYMPOSIUM: August 14-15, Lafayette

The dates are set, and the Executive Committee is busy putting together our annual Fall Symposium and business meeting. The Symposium, titled *Recent Natural Resources Research in Louisiana with a Focus Session on Economic Impacts and Implications of Natural Resource Management* will be held on Thursday and Friday August 14 – 15 in Lafayette, Louisiana. We will convene at the NOAA Estuarine Habitats and Coastal Fisheries Center at 646 Cajundome Boulevard that Thursday morning at approximately 8:00 am. We will have a social and supper Thursday evening, a dedicated poster session the next morning, and expect to wrap things up around noon on Friday.

### ***Student, Poster, and Publication Awards***

The structure of this year's Symposium will be similar to recent years. The first day is dedicated to recent research and is presented by graduate students working not only to further their own education and careers but to enhance our collective understanding of processes affecting our natural resources and the impact of their management. Mentoring our young professionals is part of the mission of the LAPB, and this is a great opportunity to share knowledge with our newest colleagues. The best student presentation, judged on both the scientific soundness of the research and quality of the presentation, is awarded a cash prize at the social Thursday evening. We are currently filling the agenda for the student program so if you know of good students who are near completion of their work and would share their results with us, please contact Mike Carloss at [mcarloss@wlf.louisiana.gov](mailto:mcarloss@wlf.louisiana.gov) as soon as possible.

Unlike the student session, which consists of a variety of research topics, our session on the second day is presented by established professionals and focuses on a selected topic. This year, we will focus on the economic impacts and implications of our natural resource management from hunters, fishermen and ecotourism to oil and gas mitigation.

Again this year, we are planning a poster session. Many of us are neither graduate students nor participants in the focus session but are doing work that would be of great interest to our membership. We are asking you to share your work with us by putting together a poster presentation. Posters should be no larger than 42 x 42 inches and we will provide boards for mounting. The posters will be available for viewing concurrent with student session the first day, but the dedicated poster session and judging will take place 8:00 to 10:00 am on Friday morning. A cash prize for the best poster will be awarded at the conclusion on Friday. Please contact Larry Reynolds at [Lreynolds@wlf.louisiana.gov](mailto:Lreynolds@wlf.louisiana.gov) or Jimmy Anthony at [janthony@wlf.louisiana.gov](mailto:janthony@wlf.louisiana.gov) by July 30<sup>th</sup> to participate in the poster session.

Lastly, the LAPB is calling for nominations for our publications awards. We honor an outstanding publication in Wildlife, Fisheries, General Conservation, and Popular categories. Eligible publications must have been published in 2007 or 2008 and at least one author must be a LAPB member. Please send your nominations to Mike Carloss at [mcarloss@wlf.louisiana.gov](mailto:mcarloss@wlf.louisiana.gov) no later than July 30<sup>th</sup> and the sooner the better. Please note that we are looking for someone to head up the publications awards. Please contact Mike Carloss if interested.

Please plan on joining us in Lafayette. Registration is at the door and costs \$10.00 for annual membership, \$10.00 for the Symposium, and \$10.00 for the social and supper. Spread the word to prospective student presenters and colleagues who would be willing to share their work via poster presentations, and we look forward to seeing all of you in August!

## **New Conservation Reserve Program Initiative Targets Coastal Prairie Restoration.**

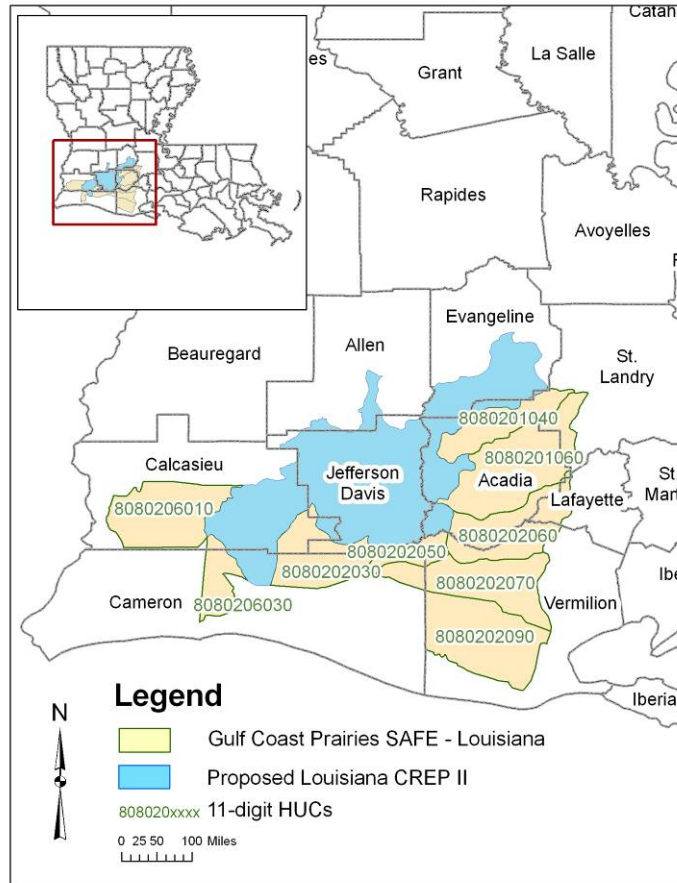
**Mike Brasher, Biological Team Leader, Gulf Coast Joint Venture**



The USDA Farm Service Agency and partners of the Gulf Coast Joint Venture are proud to announce a new initiative of the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) aimed at restoring 3,500 acres of native grasslands and shallow wetlands in southwest Louisiana. This project is part of the USDA's recently announced State Acres For wildlife Enhancement (SAFE) program designed to address habitat needs of wildlife species whose populations are declining or are otherwise of social and economic importance.

Over 2 million acres of native prairie once existed in southwest Louisiana, but now only a few hundred acres remain in small, isolated patches. Grasslands and shallow wetlands provide valuable habitat for numerous bird species including mottled duck, northern bobwhite, short-eared owl, Henslow's sparrow, LeConte's sparrow, and Sprague's pipit. Conservation practices available through this initiative include the establishment of warm-season grasses and creation of shallow wetlands, each of which will complement habitat objectives and conservation recommendations of the Gulf Coast Joint Venture and Louisiana Wildlife Action Plan. Participating landowners will be required to establish on enrolled tracts a mix of warm season grasses and forbs, and will be encouraged to establish shallow water wetlands (up to 35 acres, but not exceeding 50% of enrolled tract).

Participation in this program is limited to selected watersheds in the parishes of Acadia, Calcasieu, Cameron, Evangeline, Jefferson Davis, Lafayette, St. Landry and Vermilion. This region represents the historic range of coastal prairie and offers the greatest potential for its restoration. This project area was selected also to complement the proposed Louisiana CREP II, another CRP initiative targeting the restoration of grasslands and wetlands in southwest Louisiana. To be eligible for the SAFE project, lands must be located within one of the affected watersheds and meet basic CRP eligibility requirements. Interested landowners should check with their local FSA office to determine individual eligibility.



Similar to other Farm Bill conservation programs, eligible landowners will receive financial incentives for their participation in the Gulf Coast Prairies SAFE. Specifically, FSA offers a \$100/acre sign-up payment, up to 90 percent cost-share for eligible practice installation costs, 15 years of annual rental payments and maintenance costs, and up to 50 percent cost-share of required mid-contract management practices. Program sign-up began at FSA offices on 5 May 2008 and will continue until the target acreage has been enrolled. Contracts will be held for a minimum of 14 years, but shall not exceed 15 years.

This initiative partners private landowners with the FSA, Natural Resources Conservation Service, and numerous other conservation organizations including Ducks Unlimited, Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, The Nature Conservancy, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Unfortunately, unprecedented price trends in the agricultural commodities market are currently limiting the attractiveness of this program to eligible landowners (i.e., <200 acres presently enrolled). However, we should take note of the successes of other SAFE projects across the nation (e.g., over 20,000 acres

enrolled in South Dakota), which demonstrate a continued interest in incentivized conservation programs among a certain group of landowners. As we continue to promote the Gulf Coast Prairies SAFE project, we must consider how best to identify potentially interested landowners in southwest Louisiana and ensure the availability of this project is effectively communicated to them.

Recipients of this newsletter wishing to learn more about the Gulf Coast Prairies SAFE project and how they may help promote it should contact Fred Kimmel with the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries ([fkimmel@wlf.louisiana.gov](mailto:fkimmel@wlf.louisiana.gov); 225-765-2355) or Mike Brasher of the Gulf Coast Joint Venture office ([mbrasher@ducks.org](mailto:mbrasher@ducks.org); 337-266-8805).