

Newsletter of the Orleans Audubon Society Volume: XIX Issue: 1

A Chapter of the National Audubon Society September/October/November 2025

Fall 2025 Programs

Celebrating the Life of Joelle Finley

Speaker: Jennifer Coulson Tuesday, September 16th 7:00 to 9:00 p.m.

Community Church Unitarian Universalist, 6690 Fleur de Lis (Lakeview)

Join us for a wine and cheese party with a slideshow honoring Joelle Finley. At 7:30 p.m. Jennifer will give a 20 minute slide presentation celebrating Joelle, her many accomplishments and interests, and the countless people she inspired. Learn more about Joelle and what drove her various interests and volunteerism. For example, seeing a Rose-breasted Grosbeak back in the 1970s was the turning point for Joelle: that's when she became hooked on birding.





Joelle Finley (left) receives Swallow-tailed Kite Award, an original painting of a Green Jay, by Joan Garvey (right)

Joan's Art History

Speaker: Joan Garvey Tuesday, October 21st

6:30 p.m. social, 7:00 p.m. program

Community Church Unitarian Universalist, 6690 Fleur de Lis (Lakeview)

"When birding, I find it helpful to carry a camera for ID purposes. As an artist I use these images as reference photos necessary to create my watercolor paintings. This presentation illustrates the sequence from photograph to watercolor painting."



Photo (left) and painting (right) of Green Herons by Joan Garvey

After developing an interest in drawing and painting, Joan attended Newcomb College, formerly of Tulane University. Upon graduation she worked several years as a commercial artist before attending LSU School of Dentistry. Once retired from private practice, Joan found birding, photography and watercolor painting a great pastime.

Birding in the Steppes of Genghis Khan: Georgia to Kazakhstan

Speaker: Ken Harris Tuesday, November 18th 6:30 p.m. social, 7:00 p.m. program

Community Church Unitarian Universalist, 6690 Fleur de Lis (Lakeview)

Ken will present the slideshow that Joelle prepared from their birding trip to Central Asia in May of 2025. Joelle described the trip as "mainly target birding." One elusive target was the Himalayan Snowcock, which can be found in the high-altitude mountain ranges of Central Asia.



oelle birding in Central Asia. Photo: Ken Harris

Audubon Abita Bird Club Events

What is eBird and how do I use it?

Presenter: Chris Brantley Tuesday, September 30th

6:00-7:30 p.m.

Location: Abita Springs Town Hall, 22161 Level St., Abita Springs, LA 70420

Dr. Chris Brantley is a Consulting Ecologist and Certified Wildlife Biologist. He received a BS degree in Forestry from LSU, MS in Biology from Southeastern Louisiana University, and PhD in Oceanography and Coastal Sciences from LSU. He worked as a biologist/project manager for 30 years with the US Army Corps of Engineers, the last 15 years at the Bonnet Carre' Spillway. He is currently the compiler of the St. Tammany Christmas Bird Count (CBC), Grand Isle CBC and Reserve-Bonnet Carre' Spillway CBC and conducts three Breeding Bird Survey routes. He is an eBird reviewer for southeast Louisiana and member of the Louisiana Bird Records Committee

Follow this link for access to a free online course on how to use eBird: https://academy.allaboutbirds.org/product/ebird-essentials

What Tropical Birds are Telling Us: Is Reforestation in Northwestern Ecuador Working?

Presenter: Dr. Donata Henry Tuesday, October 28th 6:00-7:30 p.m.

Location: Abita Springs Town Hall, 22161 Level St., Abita Springs, LA 70420

How do we know when conservation is working? What can we learn from the birds? In this talk Donata Henry will share the results of five years of mist-netting in an area of active forest management and restoration in the Choco Rainforest in Ecuador. And of course, you'll get a close-up look at some extraordinary tropical birds!

Dr. Donata Henry is a Senior Professor of Practice in the Department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology at Tulane University. She co-teaches a tropical ecology field course in the Choco Rainforest at the FCAT (Fundacion para la Conservacion de los Andes Tropicales) Station where she guides students in investigating the ecology of tropical birds.

OAS Birding Field Trips

- Bring binoculars, field guides, bug spray, rain gear, sunscreen and refreshments. Boots and cell phones may be useful. Snacks and drinks are recommended.
- Contact the trip leader if you have questions. Any last minute changes will be posted on the events page of the Orleans Audubon Society website, so check https://jjaudubon.net/events/ for updates.
- At the discretion of the leader(s), trips will be divided into groups if the number of attendees becomes too large. Please be considerate of others: if you have seen a bird, move out of the way for those behind you.
- **eBird users**: Please share your eBird account email address with the trip leader and the trip leader or designee will keep the trip list to share with participants.

Couturie Forest, City Park - Half Day Trip Saturday, September 27, 7:00 a.m.

Meet at the Couturie parking lot on Harrison Ave. just east of the police stables and City Park volunteer house. *Leaders*: John Keegan (504) 296-9486, <u>keeganjohnadam@gmail.com</u>, and Marcie Blanchard <u>marcieblanchard@yahoo.com</u>

Bayou Sauvage National Wildlife Refuge – Half Day Trip Saturday, October 4, 8:00 a.m.

Meet at the Bayou Ridge Trail entrance located on US 90 (Chef Menteur Highway) across from Recovery Road in New Orleans East. Exit I-510; go left on Hwy 90, about 4 miles to the parking area on the left. Leaders: Jennifer and Tom Coulson (504) 717-3544, jenniferocoulson@gmail.com

Fontainebleau State Park, east of Mandeville on Hwy 190 - Half Day Trip Saturday, October 11, 8:00 a.m.

Meet by the splash pad. This is a joint field trip with the Pelican Point Nature Club's birdwatching group, "The Fontainebleau Early Birds" \$2.00 entrance fee required.

Leaders: Shae Freeman (504) 339-3055, <u>23joules@gmail.com</u>, and Glenn Ousset (985) 353-3412, <u>gousset@bellsouth.net</u>

Grand Isle - All Day Trip Saturday, October 18, 8:00 a.m.

Meet at Moran's grocery/gas station on the corner of Hwy. 1 and Hwy 3090 (Fourchon Rd.) right where you come off of the new bridge. Note: The new bridge across the Intracoastal Waterway is a toll bridge. Leaders: Chloe St. Germain-Vermillion (337) 804-2658, chloe.sgvermillion@audubon.org, and John Nelson (504) 258-1009, johnnygnelsoniv@gmail.com

W. Ravena Road, Diamond and Fort Jackson – All Day Trip Saturday, November 1, 8:00 a.m.

Cross the Crescent City Connection, on Westbank Exp. exit Hwy 23 (Lafayette St/Bell Chase Hwy), drive 5 miles and meet in Breaux Mart parking lot, 7902 LA-23, Belle Chasse, LA 70037, on the right just past the Intersection with Hwy 406 (Woodland Hwy). Lunch at a Subway.

Leaders: John Nelson (504) 258-1009, johnnygnelsoniv@gmail.com, and Ken Harris kenharris43@gmail.com

Jean Lafitte National Park - Half Day Trip Saturday, November 8, 8:00 a.m.

Meet at the Visitors' Center Parking Lot in the Barataria Unit of the park located on Hwy. 45. Follow signs off of the West Bank Exp. for the National Park.

Leader: Wendy Rihner (330) 348-3810, wrihner@gmail.com

St. Bernard - Half Day Trip Saturday, November 22, 8:00 a.m.

Meet at Walgreen's on the corner of Paris Rd. and Judge Perez in Chalmette.

Leader: Glenn Ousset (985) 353-3412, gousset@bellsouth.net

Honoring Joelle Finley: Couturie Forest Memorial Bench

By Jennifer Coulson, President

When OAS Vice-President Joelle Finley passed away on June 29th, the leaders of OAS, Louisiana Ornithological Society (LOS), Louisiana Master Naturalists of Greater New Orleans (LMNGNO) and City Park Conservancy (CPC) as well as birders and members of these organizations wanted to create a dedicated memorial honoring her. Since New Orleans City Park, and in particular, Couturie Forest, held a special place in Joelle's heart, Couturie was obviously the perfect location. Joelle traveled the world on birding adventures, yet her favorite and most visited birding destination was Couturie Forest. Additional reasons for selecting Couturie Forest were that Joelle inspired so many beginning birders there and because she volunteered so much of her time in Couturie Forest and other parts of City Park. The leaders also thought that a dedicated bench in Couturie would be an opportunity to "plant seeds" to inspire others. The inscription on the bench's plaque will read:

Joelle Finley birder, naturalist and environmentalist

City Park Conservancy Louisiana Master Naturalists of Greater New Orleans Louisiana Ornithological Society Orleans Audubon Society

Joelle was a leader in local and regional birding and environmental organizations including the aforementioned, but also in the Crescent City Bird Club and the New Orleans Chapter of the Sierra Club. She served on OAS's Board for the past 19 years and was Vice-President for the past 17 years. Joelle especially enjoyed co-teaching OAS's Beginning Birding courses and had planned to resume teaching these this spring. In 2021, OAS presented her with its conservation award, the Swallow-tailed Kite Award. Joelle served as LOS's Secretary for 18 years, from October 2003 to October 2021. She also volunteered for New Orleans City Park and the City Park Conservancy, helping to develop and maintain the birding corridor, conduct bird monitoring there, as well as lead birding walks and help maintain Couturie Forest. She was also involved in the many versions of City Park's Master Plan. Joelle's varied interests included world travel, birding, and photographing wildlife. A top-notch raconteur, she provided many delightful and entertaining talks for these and other organizations.

Memorial Donations Needed for Joelle's Couturie Forest Bench

OAS, LOS, CPC, and LMNGNO are honoring Joelle Finley's memory with a named, memorial bench in Couturie Forest of New Orleans City Park. The memorial bench costs \$10,000, and each organization will contribute \$2500. A dedication ceremony in City Park's Couturie Forest will be planned.

OAS is accepting donations in Joelle Finley's memory to help cover the cost of the memorial bench. If sending a check, please make it payable to "Orleans Audubon Society" and note "Joelle Finley" on the memo line. Mail check to: Mary Joe Krieger, OAS Treasurer, 3623 Nashville Avenue, New Orleans, LA 70125.

Donations may also be made using the PayPal "Donate" button on the OAS website: https://jjaudubon.net/donate/. If using PayPal, please note that the donation is in honor of Joelle Finley, or send an email note to OrleansAudubon@aol.com.

OAS would also like to take this opportunity to thank those who have already donated!

Changes in OAS Leadership

By Jennifer Coulson, President

If you knew Joelle Finley, I'm sure you will agree that her passing in June left a multidimensional void in the birding, nature and environmental communities as well as in our hearts. In terms of OAS leadership and service, Joelle served selflessly as Vice-President, Program Chair and Field Trip Chair, among other roles. Not surprisingly, it will take three people to fill her shoes. The good news is that three highly capable folks have stepped forward to help fill this void. It is my great pleasure to welcome Chloe St. Germain-Vermillion as our new Vice-President, Donata Henry as Program Chair and OAS's newest Board Member, and John Nelson as our new Field Trip Chair.

Chloe St. Germain-Vermillion joined the OAS Board in January of 2024. She is the Editor of The Ibis and serves on the Conservation Committee. As Audubon Delta's Coastal Bird Technician, Chloe coordinates the Audubon Coastal Bird Surveys and spearheads the Rooftop Nesting Birds Program in Louisiana.

Dr. Donata Henry is a Lifetime Member of OAS and spearheads the Audubon Abita Bird Club, an OAS affiliate club headquartered in Abita Springs. As a Senior Professor of the Practice for Tulane University's Department of Ecology & Evolutionary Biology, she teaches on campus courses such as Ornithology and Natural History of Louisiana and also teaches abroad in the Grand Canyon, Copenhagen, and at FCAT in northwestern Ecuador. Donata also serves as Associate Chair of Undergraduate Education in EBIO. Her doctoral dissertation research investigated Swainson's Warblers nesting in bottomland hardwood and planted pine forests.

John Nelson is a Lifetime Member of OAS and joined the OAS Board in April of 2021. He assists with the Swallow-tailed Kite Project and Wild Bird Rescue and serves on the Sanctuary Committee. He has also built Chimney Swift towers in 3 locations. He is currently overseeing the rebuilding of the Marguerite Moffett Audubon Sanctuary boardwalk in Chauvin. John had been assisting with and leading field trips, and Joelle had been coaching him to take over as Field Trip leader.

Youth Environmental and Conservation Training Scholarship Program

Educating the next generation of conservationists and environmentalists is of utmost importance to safeguarding our natural world's future. Our youth are the nation's most vital resource to insuring the conservation of biodiversity, to promoting sustainability, and to tackling the future's toughest environmental challenges. In 2025, OAS received a donation from the McDaniel Charitable Foundation to award scholarships to high school students and clubs to provide training and experience in the fields of conservation, sustainability, and the environment. OAS hopes to identify funds to continue its scholarship program in 2026 and beyond. The following two reports are from the 2025 scholarship recipients.

Washington Youth Summit on the Environment

By Juniper Falterman

Thank you, Orleans Audubon Society for making it possible for me to attend the Washington Youth Summit on the Environment (WYSE). I was honored to be nominated as a national youth delegate this summer, representing Louisiana, my school, and my community, and Orleans Audubon helped me attend with a partial scholarship grant.

Hosted by George Mason University in Northern Virginia, WYSE is an intensive six day long conference whose mission is to foster leadership in environmental issues, sustainability, and conservation in high school juniors and seniors across the country. Throughout the week, we had the opportunity to tour George Mason's campus and visit the Smithsonian National Zoo and Conservation Biology Institute, National Monuments, and the National Mall's museums. We also had the opportunity to choose a field visit, such as water quality assessments on the Rappahannock River, the National Aquarium in Baltimore, or a NASA visit. My field visit was to Wetland Studies and Solutions (a natural and cultural resource consultant group within an LEED-Gold office), and to Skyline Caverns where I learned about different cave formations and the Caverns' history.

Each day at WYSE, experts in a variety of different fields gave talks regarding topics such as personal/professional images, empathy in the workplace, the journey towards environmental careers, zoo ethics/transparency, the importance of saying 'yes' to new opportunity, natural restoration, marine species population through fisheries and economics, the future of Gen Z's role in climate change and conservation, water quality standards, relationships between climate change and partisan issues, and staying positive in an environmental career. Impressive seminars included talks by Elise Bernardoni, the Director of Engagement at Canopy Strategic Partners, Dr. Diego Valderrama, Aquaculture Officer for the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, and Dr. Aliyah Griffith, a marine biologist, CEO and founder of Mahogany Mermaids, and a National Geographic Explorer.

Delegates were also encouraged to speak with their state's representatives in D.C. Although I was unable to speak with Louisiana's representatives, I had the unique opportunity to speak with Senior Regulatory Scientist at the EPA, Dr. Jacques Oliver, and EPA Deputy Director, Dr. Janet Nestlerode. We met at the National Museum of National History over lunch, and I learned about the Clean Water Act, water quality standards, and how the EPA continues to do its job through different administrations. This was one of my most memorable and informative conversations, and I am so lucky that Dr. Oliver and Dr. Nestlerode freed up their afternoon for me.

As the Summit came to a close, I felt so fortunate to be surrounded by people my age who are passionate about the environment and who genuinely love to learn about the people around them. On the final night, we had a group dinner and Gala, and it was the perfect close to the Summit. Because of WYSE, I have made friends who come from all over. This experience direction and encouragement gave regarding what I hope will be a successful career relating to conservation environmental studies. I am incredibly grateful for the Orleans Audubon Society for helping me get to WYSE! Instagram page: @juniper_wyse25



Minden High School Nature Club

By John Dillon

John Dillon founded the Minden High School Nature Club in 2007, and the club now has over 50 dues-paying members each year. Funding comes from members' dues, local non-profit conservation groups, and pledges in an annual Bird-a-thon. During the 2024-25 school year, the club started with a trip in August to the Caldwell Zoo in east Texas where a couple members were able to enjoy a private, keeper-led experience with their pair of Louisiana Black Bears.

In September, we held our annual back-to-school pizza party and night hike at Kisatchie's Caney Lakes Recreation Area outside Minden, where we called in Eastern-Screech Owls and Barred Owls. Near Halloween, we made our annual four-day trip to Petit Jean State Park in Arkansas where we hiked, rode horses, did technical rock climbing, and lots more. December featured a private tour by the curator at Briarwood Caroline Dormon Nature Preserve followed by fireworks at the Natchitoches Christmas Festival. In February, we met with local Master Falconer Francie Forrester at Bodcau WMA for falconry with her Harris's Hawks (who are now both older than all the members!).



And finally in April, we made our first-ever trip to Hot Springs National Park, where we had four days of hiking, the Gangster Museum of America, Ranger-led tours about thermophiles and the history of the springs, a wax museum, Marvin Gardens, and mini-golf. Without continued funding from such groups as OAS, it would be impossible to allow these kids, many of whom are underprivileged, to enjoy such experiences and gain such exposure to nature and conservation.

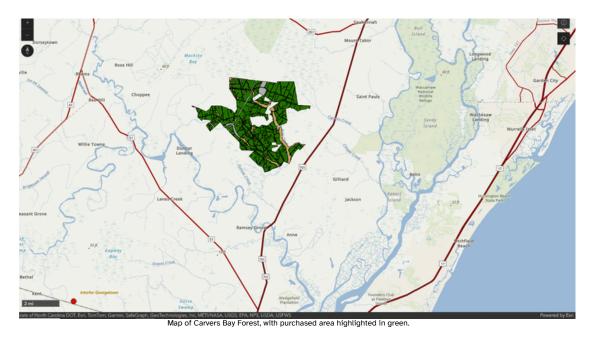
Swallow-tailed Kites Inspire Forest Conservation in South Carolina

By Emily Jo Williams

Southeast Director of Sustainable Forest Partnerships, American Bird Conservancy

When American Bird Conservancy (ABC) launched a new partnership with International Paper (IP) in January 2020, ABC's lead for the project and Southeast Director of Sustainable Forest Partnerships, E.J. Williams, did not anticipate how that work would lead to a huge conservation win for Swallow-tailed Kites. The pandemic interrupted plans to bring foresters and bird conservationists together to integrate bird conservation into IP's supply chain, and the backup plan became surveying birds in working forests surrounding IP Mills such as the one found in Georgetown, South Carolina. When a Swallow-tailed Kite soared over one of the survey points, IP and ABC agreed these beautiful ambassadors for sustainable forest management just had to be part of the partnership. Williams reached out to scientists at the Avian Research and Conservation Institute, and the first kite, *Peters Creek*, was captured and outfitted with a GPS transmitter in June 2021. Two more kites, Carvers Bay and Big Branch - were captured nearby in 2021, and *Simmons Creek* joined our Georgetown County aerial research team in 2023. Orleans Audubon Society joined the partnership in 2023, and collectively we have captured, tagged and tracked 15 Swallow-tailed kites from South Carolina, Georgia, Mississippi, and Louisiana.

On July 23, The Conservation Fund announced that it has purchased more than 8,000 acres of forested land near Carvers Bay, South Carolina. The Conservation Fund's quick action when this property came to market ensured that it will be managed for conservation and sustainable forestry and not subdivided for development in the rapidly expanding Myrtle Beach region. Carvers Bay Forest will remain a sustainable working forest, and a home for *Peters Creek*, *Simmons Creek*, and many other Swallow-tailed Kites.



"When I was watching *Peters Creek* and his mate building their nest this April, delighting in the fuzzy chick peering out from a huge cypress in May, and then celebrating another successful fledgling taking flight in late June, I didn't know that The Conservation Fund was preparing to invest \$34 million dollars in the future of our kites," said Williams. In talking with The Conservation Fund's South Carolina state director, Jason Johnson, Williams learned that the Swallow-tailed Kite research demonstrating the importance of this forested landscape for birds was a key factor in the decision to purchase Carvers Bay Forest.

Remarking on the value of this forest for so many migratory birds, International Paper's Jeremy Poirier said, "The Prairie Warblers and Yellow-breasted Chats should stop yapping and hiding in those young pine trees and fly up to say thank you to those big forked tailed birds flying above."

The size of the Carvers Bay Forest property alone makes the land deal stand out, creating a new core of conservation activity in the northeastern part of the state. In close consultation with the State of South Carolina, The Conservation Fund is working to eventually open the land for public recreation access, but those efforts are just beginning. When the time is right, the group plans to sell the land to the South Carolina Forestry Commission to establish a new state forest, permanently protecting this special landscape and providing public access for enjoying the kites and abundant wildlife.



"Every year, we lose one million acres of working forests to fragmentation and development," said Jason Johnson. "The Carvers Bay Forest is one of the nation's most productive working forests. When the land went up for sale, we stepped in to ensure that it will continue to support wildlife habitat, clean water, recreation, and economic opportunities for local communities — now, and for generations to come."

In addition to International Paper, the Swallow-tailed Kite research has been supported by Resource Management Service, White Oak Forest Management, the Wise Batten Family, PotlatchDeltic, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, and numerous forest managers and private forest landowners.

THE HARAHAN EMPIRE STRIKES BACK!

By Andrew C. Wilson, J.D., L.L.M, OAS Conservation Chair

After wasting nearly \$20,000 in legal fees on a bungled prosecution of a retired couple for maintaining Purple Martin nesting gourds in their own backyard, the Mayor of Harahan is back at it, issuing yet another summons against Harahan residents Carol and Andrew Stamm, simply for trying to save this challenged species.

These birds migrate once per year for a few months to Harahan and other areas of the United States and require housing due to ongoing habitat loss. Purple Martins are one of America's favorite songbirds and greatly assist humans by eating all sorts of harmful insects. They are also graceful, acrobatic flyers and fun to watch!

But not from the viewpoint of Harahan Mayor Tim Baudier. One would think the Harahan Mayor "would have bigger fish to fry," since the City of Harahan reportedly unlicensed contractor about paid an \$882,000 last year for various jobs including more than half a million dollars for one project — without any formal bids or binding agreements, according documents recently obtained by The Times-Picayune. Now he wants to waste another \$20,000 or more on another prosecution of the Stamms and the innocent Purple Martins.



It's impossible to forget that this is the same Mayor Tim Baudier, who said on the record in a Town Council meeting regarding the Purple Martins that he would "have given them Alka-Seltzer" so as to induce a slow agonizing death. A French philosopher once said, "Toute nation a le gouvernement qu'elle mérite." ("Every nation gets the government it deserves.") Maybe the people of the City of Harahan, a designated "Bird Sanctuary City" per City Ordinance 1, do not deserve Mayor Baudier or his opposition to Purple Martins.



Purple Martins nesting - The Advocate

Anyway, the Mayor's Office has now served a summons to the Stamms who have maintained Purple Martin gourds nesting structures in their own backyard for over 37 years until now. Their arraignment on "nuisance" charges is set for August 27, 2025 at 5:00 p.m. before the Mayor's Court in Harahan. In all likelihood, as with the last go-round, the Mayor will now hire a Special Prosecutor and a Special Magistrate in his efforts to prosecute the Stamms and the Purple Martins and obtain a conviction. Please consider appearing at the arraignment to show your support for the Stamms and Purple Martins.

Update On The Mid-Barataria Sediment Diversion Project

By David P. Muth, OAS Board Member

Louisiana, with the acquiescence of the Federal government, canceled the Mid-Barataria Sediment Diversion—the real beginning of meaningful delta restoration, being paid for not by Louisiana taxpayers but by fines and penalties from the Deepwater Horizon oil spill. The Louisiana Trustee Implementation Group (TIG), the entity responsible for overseeing the expenditure of Natural Resources Damages funds, signed off on Governor Landry's plan to write off 618 million dollars, to pay off the contractors and mothball the largest single ecosystem restoration project in U.S. history, the cornerstone of the Coastal Master Plan.

Ironically, this shocking and tragic news comes just after the 15th anniversary of the oil disaster, and just before 20th anniversaries of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, which spurred the creation of Louisiana's internationally recognized coastal restoration program. Because of reforms undertaken in response to those devastating hurricanes, Louisiana adopted a science-based, publicly-supported approach that has defined coastal restoration leadership for the world.

Thanks to the Governor's decision, that is all now over. We are back to where we were when the storms hit. Despite forty years of science and planning predating the Katrina and Rita, despite uncounted public meetings and solicitations of public, business, scientific and engineering participation, the decision to kill the project was made in back rooms, without any public or informed input, just like the old days.

Coastal Louisiana, a delta, is sinking. Because of short-sighted and ignorant past decisions, like all but completely cutting off the river from the delta with levees, closing distributaries, and allowing oil companies and port authorities, along with the Corps of Engineers, to build a vast network of canals, we have already lost over 2,000 square miles of coastal wetlands. And now the sea is rising, and the rate of rise is accelerating. Mid-Barataria would actually only have been a modest, but significant, beginning, tapping less than ten percent of the Spring flood. In a way when first proposed it was a bit of a pipe dream, because no money was available, but then the oil spill provided the cash. We have now squandered \$600 million of that cash, and lost countless years as we sink lower relative to the sea.

Our homes and way of life are quite simply not sustainable without reconnection between the river and the delta. Inevitably, that connection will be made again, whether through disaster or through a future, much more expensive and as yet unfunded, suite of diversions. We must continue the fight, despite this possibly fatal setback, to try to ensure that the reconnection is made through science-based, realistic planning, and not through uncontrolled crevasses.

The SE Louisiana Chapter of the

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