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NLLD Executive Director Recognizes all involved in Historic Funding for Morganza to the Gulf

January 21, 2022 by Dwayne Bourgeois, North Lafourche Levee District

Raceland, LA- Tuesday and Wednesday of this week saw two major puzzle pieces for the construction of the Morganza to the Gulf Hurricane Protection project fall into place. Two great days for Coastal Louisiana and Lafourche and Terrebonne Parishes in particular.

First, on Tuesday there was a ceremony on the signing of the Project Partnership Agreement or PPA. The PPA is the final document that must be in place to begin federal construction on a previously authorized project that has received a new start appropriation. The PPA was signed by the Morganza to the Gulf Project's Federal Sponsor, Col Murphy at the US Army Corps of Engineers District in New Orleans. It is also signed by the project's two non-federal co-sponsors, the State of Louisiana through the Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority signed by its Board's Chairman, Chip Kline and the Terrebonne Levee and Conservation District via its Board President Tony Alford.

Then, on Wednesday, it was confirmed that the project would receive construction funding in the amount of \$378.5 million from the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA). That is in addition to our initial \$12 million we got through the new start designation.

These were two fantastic days culminating from work going back to 1992 when the project first got started. These two days now mark the beginning of many more needed to get through the project's completion. We have many pieces of the puzzle yet to put in place.

When looking at everything that had to be done to get to these two days, the number of people we need to thank and credit is extraordinary. But I want to point out a few at the risk of missing many:

The citizens of Lafourche and Terrebonne who have voted to tax themselves for flood protection.

The Terrebonne, North and South Lafourche Levee Districts and their past and present Officers and Members of their Boards of Commissioners who never have loss focus on this project and have supported everything it takes to get this project moving.

Our Local Parish Governments, especially the Parish Presidents past and current who have taken a very active role in promoting this project. Lafourche Parish's Archie Chaisson and Terrebonne's Gordy Dove have been a reliable echo at all levels in communicating the local need for this project.

Our local State Delegation over the years who supported providing state funding year after year to build out portions of this system even before the first federal dollar. We currently have an outstanding bunch of Representatives and Senators who fight for Morganza funding at every turn. Their support has been immeasurable. The funding they provided has been used to provide protection already in place with its benefits realized from having prevented flooding during numerous storms.

The Louisiana Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority (CPRA) under the past leadership, especially that of Garret Graves, Jerome Zeringue and current leadership of Chairman Chip Kline who were and remain stalwarts for the Morganza to the Gulf Project. Inside of the CPRA there are countless professionals who provided technical, legal, programmatic, and other means of support to the advancement of this project.

The Governors of Louisiana in the past and especially our current Governor John Bell Edwards who has made this project a highest priority for his administration.

Many of our past and all our present Federal Delegation in DC should be celebrating the accomplishments realized by the arrival of these two days. Congressmen Steve Scalise and Garret Graves, along with their excellent staffs, have spent countless hours helping us navigate through the process of getting this project a federal new start designation in DC. Having worked directly with them on this project's advancement, I can confidently say that without their tireless efforts and leadership, we simply would not have a project today. Because of their relationships, we have long enjoyed the support of other Louisiana Representatives, especially Mike Johnson, Ralph Abraham, Cedric Richmond and now Troy Carter. Our past senators John Breaux, David Vitter and Mary Landrieu all were instrumental in keeping this project alive when it could have easily perished. And today, the support and leadership of Senators John Kennedy and Bill Cassidy are obviously bearing fruit.

That brings us to our partners at the US Army Corps of Engineers. A federal project of this magnitude does not get moving without a bunch of challenges. I can confidently say that our relationship with the Corps at all levels has never been stronger. This includes the District in New Orleans under current command of Colonel Murphy. We have seen several Colonels move through New Orleans who have helped us keep this project moving. But, the work of Col Murphy and his predecessor Col Clancy has been pivotal in helping us get this project started. As Colonels come and go, we have been able to count on the civilian side of the Corps to keep our project advancing. The leadership of Mark Wingate and his project staff have been outstanding. The next level up at the Corps is the Division Headquarters in Vicksburg. Major General Rick Kaiser got this project moving again when it seemed hopelessly stalled. Major Generals Toy and Holland have been able to continue to support the new approach that was used to reconsider the cost and implementation of the project. Again, their civilian staff were instrumental in helping us keep this project moving forward. In Washington DC, the project goes through another level of scrutiny requiring the support of so many at Corps HQ. This broadens out to include the Assistant Secretary of the Army and the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) as part of the Administration. Lt Gen Semonite and Lt Gen Spellmon have both been able to garner support for our project working with ASA-CW RD James and the OMB to get the project cleared on all levels and funded. Again, within the Corps, there are simply too many people to name who were part of keeping this project moving.

The long list of thank you's and credits barely does anything to capture the breadth and scope of what it has taken to get this project from its beginning to today, where federal construction is beginning in earnest. Yet, we have a very long way to go. We will need the continued support of everyone on this list and many more in our future to see this project to completion. Still, every bit of this project brings benefits that are realized immediately. It has truly been a milestone week. ###