Expert Panel on Diversion Planning and Implementation: Meeting #4

February 12, 2015

Charge to Expert Panel on Diversion Planning and Implementation

"Provide technical input, review and guidance as plans are refined on diverting freshwater and sediment from the Mississippi and Atchafalaya rivers into adjacent estuarine basins to build, maintain and sustain coastal wetlands"

Frequently Asked Questions

- **Why are there no Panel members from Louisiana?**
  - Experts from Louisiana are in fact currently engaged and leading much of the work
  - The Panel was established to review and advise the CPRA and the teams that are engaged in these efforts
- **What authority does the Panel have?**
  - We are not a decision-making panel
  - We will provide expert advice and recommendations for consideration
- **Is the Panel reviewing the decisions made in the Master Plan?**
  - No, the Panel is advising on science and research needs related to advancing and further developing/designing sediment diversion projects that were in the 2012 Comprehensive Master Plan

Summary of Meeting #3

- Panel meeting was held October 27-29, 2014 in Baton Rouge
- Ten background and update presentations from CPRA, academic institutions, and consulting firms
- Focus on stakeholder concerns, status of biophysical monitoring, and plans for ecosystem modeling of fish and shellfish
- Special panel discussions on broader effects of diversions, and expectations from ecosystem modeling
- Public comment period

Meeting #3 Report

- Built on recommendations from Reports #1 and #2
- Focused on three broad areas
  - Stakeholder concerns (those underway, those not underway, and issues of communication)
  - Biophysical monitoring (identification of gaps and recommendations for a more robust program)
  - Ecosystems modeling (fish and shellfish)
- A total of 10 recommendations: 7 on stakeholder concerns, 1 on biophysical monitoring, 2 on ecosystems modeling (2 of the recommendations repeated from Report #2)

Summary of Findings from October Meeting

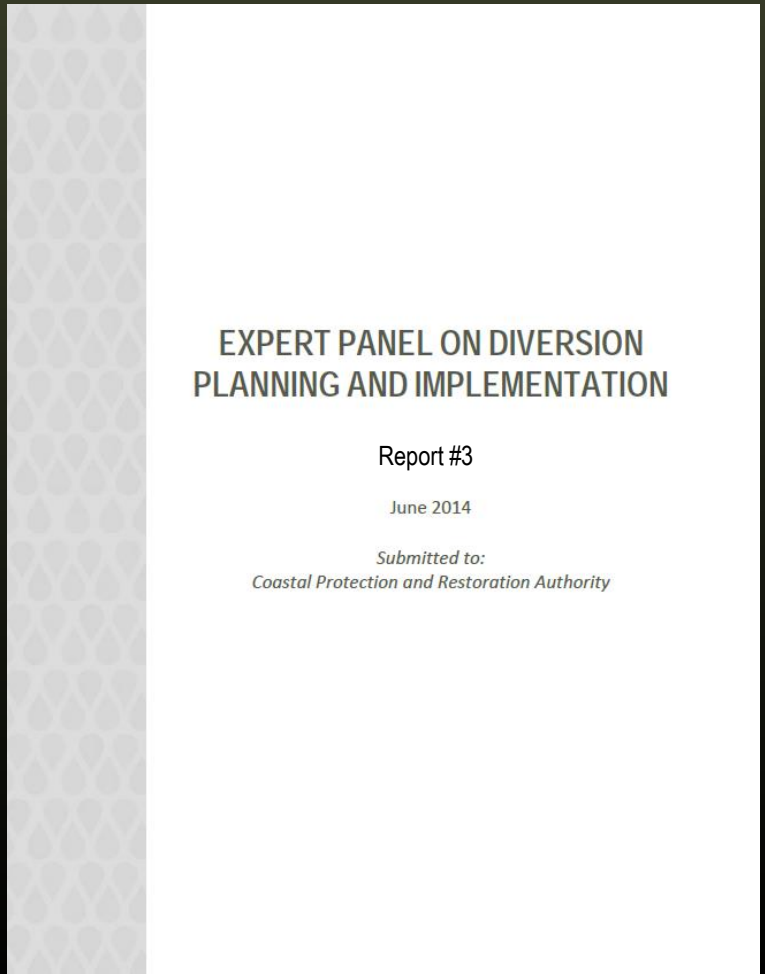
- CPRA has implemented a number of our previous recommendations, and staff has been very responsive in answering our questions and providing key information when it is requested.
- There continues to be a need for more in-depth peer review of each technical element whether in monitoring, modeling, or in socio-economic studies.
- Socio-economic research and analysis, and how it is communicated to stakeholders, continues to be in an early stage of development. The overall conceptual model for linking this work to biophysical outputs needs to be articulated, and the goal for socio-economic analysis needs to be clearly established.
- While the number of biophysical variables being monitored is impressive, the Panel identified gaps in measuring suspended sediments, bathymetry, and wave processes.
- There are areas of technical concern in ecosystems modeling tied to the need to ensure compatibility among models, how they accommodate animal movement, whether the monitoring data are sufficiently rigorous to support validation.

Report #3

Report of Meeting #3 available at:
www.thewaterinstitute.org

Contents Include:

- Executive Summary
- Introduction and Background
- Focus of Meeting #3
- Discussion, Findings, and Recommendations
- Appendices 1-3



Charge for February 2015 Panel Meeting

- Determine whether tools and approaches in Winter 2014 decisions appropriate and sufficient to support advancing the four diversions to next phase of analysis. Are there specific areas of engineering design that present challenges for implementation?

- Identify highest priority issues and reasonable expectations for types of analyses regarding water quality, vegetation and soils with and without diversions. Which ecosystem outcomes can be predicted with more confidence?

- Determine whether approaches for socio-economic analysis provide acceptable base to support decisions for moving diversions to advanced planning and engineering and design. Are biophysical outputs that will inform socio-economic analyses sufficient to evaluate with and without sediment diversions?