

**Memorandum of Understanding Among**  
**McNeese State University,**  
**Nicholls State University,**  
**Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College,**  
**Louisiana State University Agricultural Center,**  
**Louisiana Universities Marine Consortium,**  
**Southeastern Louisiana University,**  
**Southern University at New Orleans,**  
**Tulane University,**  
**the University of Louisiana at Lafayette,**  
**the University of New Orleans, and**  
**the University of Southern Mississippi**

**to create the**

**Coastal Restoration and Enhancement through Science and Technology  
(CREST) Program**

**I. Purpose**

The purpose of this Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is to create a cooperative program to help policymakers, planners and coastal resource managers use the latest science and best technologies to ensure sustainable and productive coastal habitats and communities. The MOU establishes the goal of the program and describes some of the expected benefits the program will have for both coastal habitat restoration efforts and coastal communities. This MOU also outlines the structure of the program including how universities and federal partners will work together towards the program goal, the competitive process by which most funds will be distributed, and the agreement among the signatories to coordinate their efforts to secure funding for the program.

**II. Background**

The Nation is currently investing millions of dollars in restoring productive coastal habitat. The need becomes greater as more coastal fishery stocks decline below critical levels, both erosion and sea-level rise remove the natural buffers that protect our

communities from storms and flooding, and the population living on or near the coast escalates daily. Our infrastructure and our livelihoods are at risk – the restoration response therefore must be implemented swiftly and successfully. Successful restoration of any natural ecosystem requires sound understanding of the problems and how they developed, as well as clearly identified targets for what we expect from the system after restoration. There are usually many possible future scenarios for a coastal ecosystem, and care must be taken to choose one that is both desirable and attainable with the time and funding available. Scientific uncertainties and technological inadequacies must not limit our ability to respond to the needs of coastal communities. Rather advances in science and technology should be integrated directly into restoration programs to ensure that coastal habitat restoration is cost-effectively implemented and successfully sustains coastal resources.

### **III. Coastal Restoration and Enhancement through Science and Technology**

The needs of our coastal communities will always be greater than the funds available. Future planning, emergency response and cost-effective implementation of restoration programs all need state-of-the-art support tools. While programs that build restoration projects continue to invest millions of dollars to sustain our coast, these science and technology needs remain unmet and the public largely remains unaware of the consequences the future holds. To this end, universities in the north central Gulf of Mexico have come together, combining their strengths and skills, to establish the cooperative program for Coastal Restoration and Enhancement through Science and Technology (CREST program). University partners will work closely with federal and state agencies and other interested groups to ensure information developed is available to all involved in ongoing and future coastal habitat restoration efforts.

The goal of the CREST program is to help policymakers, planners and coastal resource managers use the latest science and best technologies to ensure sustainable and productive coastal habitats and communities.

The benefits of the program include:

- System-level assessments of the effects and implications of restoration actions for coastal habitats, coastal resources, fisheries and coastal communities.
- Coordinated model development to allow predictions of future coastal conditions and their consequences for important economic resources and coastal communities, including evaluation of the consequences of large-scale restoration efforts.
- Development and evaluation of new approaches and technologies for decision-support, habitat evaluation, real-time monitoring, and restoration actions.
- Continual evaluation and improvement of the tools and techniques used in coastal restoration, resulting in more efficient and effective on-the-ground restoration projects.

- Training opportunities to facilitate transfer of new findings, approaches and technologies to resource agencies and the private sector.
- Improved communication and interactions among the private sector, academia, and government agencies involved with coastal restoration work.
- Clear communication with citizens concerning the consequences of coastal habitat loss, the impact on future threat preparedness, and the community actions necessary for sustainable social, economic and environmental health.

#### **IV. Operation of the CREST Program**

The Program will issue Requests for Proposals (RFPs) to solicit studies and evaluations that address priority areas of concern and the majority of program funds will be distributed in this manner. While the Principal Investigator on each proposal must be a full-time employee of a signatory university or institute of higher education, study participants may be from any university or institution, and inter-institutional proposals will be encouraged.

Within 30 days of funds becoming available for this effort the Chief Executive Officers of each partner institution shall convene an Executive Board. The Executive Board will consist of one member from each MOU signatory institution and representatives of partner agencies as agreed by the signatories. The Executive Board will make all budgetary decisions for the program, including annual budgets for partners and the allocation of funds to the RFP process. The Executive Board will make the final decisions on the list of priority issues to be included in each RFP. The Chair of the Executive Board will rotate among institution partners on a two-year basis. The Vice-Chair of the Executive Board will be the next Chair. The Chief Executive Officer of each partner institution will designate a member of the Executive Board for each two-year rotation cycle. The Chair of the Executive Board will oversee the distribution of funds from the selected Fiscal Agent.

The Project Director will be selected by the Executive Board to coordinate all activities of the collaborative program including: liaison between all groups involved in the program; working with the Technical Advisory Board and Fiscal Agent to carry out directives of the Executive Board; develop RFP's each funding cycle in collaboration with the Technical Advisory Board and issue the RFP's at the directive of the Executive Board; develop and coordinate external peer-review and final panel review mechanisms in collaboration with the Technical Advisory Board and the Executive Board; and represent the program at the directive of the Executive Board. The Project Director will not be eligible for competitive research funding from this program.

The Technical Advisory Board will be established by the Executive Board and will include science and engineering experts from partner universities and agencies, as well as other interested restoration agencies and organizations and nationally recognized experts. The Executive Board will appoint members to the Technical Advisory Board for

renewable terms. These will be staggered to ensure both continuity of approach and the introduction of new ideas. The Technical Advisory Board will provide recommendations to the Executive Board on the annual list of priority issues to be included in the RFP, and the process for review of the proposals. Members of the Technical Advisory Board will be eligible for competitive funding through the peer-reviewed process of the program, so they will not be involved in either oversight of written or panel peer-reviews or recommendations for funding to the Executive Board. The Project Director with the Executive Board will coordinate this.

The Louisiana Universities Marine Consortium will act as Fiscal Agent for the CREST program. Duties of the Fiscal Agent include receiving, distributing and tracking funds on behalf of the Executive Board; working with the Executive Board to determine the most expedient mechanism to issue contracts for final funding awards to consortium members; and responsibility for all fiscal transactions between the Executive Board and the recipients of the awards each funding cycle.

## **V. Partnerships**

It is anticipated that the universities participating in the CREST program will collectively enter into partnerships with agencies and institutions with interests in coastal restoration.

In particular, an MOU will be developed with NOAA to show their partnership in the CREST program. It is expected that the MOU with NOAA will demonstrate their support of the CREST program, address the role of NOAA staff and scientists in the effort, and describe how funding would be administered through NOAA offices in Louisiana.

The anticipated partnership with USGS will also be described in a separate MOU. That MOU is expected to show how CREST program activities can be coordinated with existing and future USGS coastal science efforts.

Additional partners with resources to support university activities within the context of the CREST program may be added by agreement of the Executive Board, and additional MOUs will be developed as necessary.

## **VI. Agreement**

The signatories to this MOU (the Signatories) agree to participate in the CREST program. The Signatories agree to collectively pursue funding for the program and to coordinate their efforts so as to ensure efficient and effective communication of the program's purpose and structure.

## VII. Effective Date

This MOU will become effective upon signature by the authorized representatives from the named universities and institutions. Any signatory party may terminate their participation in this MOU upon 60 days written notice to the Executive Board. Its provisions will be reviewed when funding is obtained for the program, and amended or supplemented as may be agreed upon mutually.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
McNeese State University

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Nicholls State University

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Louisiana State University and Agricultural &  
Mechanical College

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Louisiana State University Agricultural Center

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Louisiana Universities Marine Consortium

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Southeastern Louisiana University

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Tulane University

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
University of Louisiana at Lafayette

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
University of New Orleans

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
University of Southern Mississippi

Signed \_\_\_\_\_  
Southern University at New Orleans

Date \_\_\_\_\_