



Image: Lane Lefort Photography



# THE PATH AHEAD

## Moving Forward

BTNEP is always a work in progress. The CCMP revision is a testament to the willingness of the entire association of people who care about the estuary to become and remain engaged. A primary reason for this ongoing interest may well be the science-based, consensus-driven approach to ecosystem restoration that NEPs use. The process continues to be relevant in an ever-changing landscape. It has taken great teamwork for this NEP to truly evaluate where it has been as an organization and where it wants to go in the future.

This CCMP revision looks forward to engaging new people and asking long-time supporters to continue to participate in actively benefiting and defending the estuary. As the land washes away, the ecological, economic, and cultural values that remain and what we hold so dear will increase. The message in the title of the BTNEP Characterization Report, first published in 1995, “Saving Our Good Earth – A Call to Action” continues to accurately reflect our status and our commitment. We need and we have people who are willing to join together to work and protect this enormously valuable national resource.

The Action Plans identified in Chapter 5 are wide-ranging and considered significant and essential. The Action Plans recommend implementable activities to improve the local ecosystem as a resource for all, as we all benefit from its bounty. This CCMP is reflective of the natural processes and human activities that have changed the landscape and seek to address our basic human desire to get better. As we move forward, we want to be good stewards of the natural resources that remain and guard this abundant environment for future generations.

This estuary is treasured by visitors and residents alike. The nation depends on this estuary for things as widely varying as oysters for their tables, gasoline for their cars, and music for their souls. The people who live, work, and play in the estuary have a strong willingness to protect it. BTNEP, through the goals set forth in the first CCMP and with this revision, provides people with a place to learn more about what they appreciate in the estuary and also provides people a place to share in the action of restoration.

The founders of BTNEP have established a path to protect and preserve the estuary. They are the visionaries for the model we are working hard to implement. They have helped us reshape our approach to restoration by setting the accepted standard to be one that is inclusive in nature and requires us to reach agreement through compromise and consensus. With more than a 50-member BTNEP MC representing a host of stakeholders, we have learned to understand the value of our neighbors’ needs. This document calls the next generation of diverse stakeholders such as representatives from industry and business, fisheries, agriculture, oil and gas, government agencies, individual citizens, landowners, civic organizations, hunters, scientists, engineers, environmentalists, economists, urban planners,

educators, and the like to roll up their sleeves, get involved, and work together to forge solutions that benefit all.

While it continues to be true that no other place on Earth is disappearing as quickly as the Barataria-Terrebonne estuarine system, citizens are tackling difficult problems with respect for what is at stake. People in this estuary have been working together effectively because the problems here threaten our very existence. Varying expertise supports goals to help, to improve, and to restore this fragile estuary. This cooperative characteristic of BTNEP and its

stakeholders positions us to move onward with diligence and respect.

Our success will ultimately be determined by the way we use the tools we have to move forward. Our character, strength, and courage will be required to continue to face the ongoing challenges. We must continue to take steps to preserve some of the most diverse and fertile habitats in the world.

We are ready; we have a path before us here in our CCMP. Once again, we invite you to join us in our ongoing efforts to preserve the past and protect the future together.



*BTNEP works with youth through its volunteer program to encourage the next generation to work together to create ecological solutions to complex problems. Image: BTNEP*



