

ATTACHMENT "A"

Thank you Mr Chairman, members of the task force for the chance to be here today.

I am Chris Macaluso. I am the Center for Marine Fisheries Director for the Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership. TRCP is national non-profit sportsman's organization that works with hunting and fishing and habitat organizations primarily to advance federal law and policy. Our mission is to guarantee all Americans quality places to hunt and fish. We have 58 partners, including the largest sportsmen's groups in the world like Ducks Unlimited, Coastal Conservation Association, BASS, International Gamefish Association and many others.

My office is in Washington DC but I live and work out of Baton Rouge. I've never lived anywhere but Louisiana, and frankly, the incredible hunting and fishing opportunities here is one of the biggest reasons I've never left.

The TRCP has not taken a formal position one way or the other on the issue of who can access the waters of Louisiana. And, I can say personally it's not an issue that has had a negative affect thus far on my hunting and fishing opportunities. I am fortunate that I fish primarily in areas that are public water bottom or where landowners don't aggressively block water access. But I have certainly heard stories of conflicts and I have seen places that are restricted that I believe should be public waterways such as natural bayous and lakes.

Several TRCP partner organizations are concerned about the disputes here between landowners and anglers and boaters. Many of them have approached me for advice to decide how involved they should be, if they need to direct resources and personnel to our state to help support legislation and potentially resolve the issue. It's a unique situation that is difficult for anyone outside of Louisiana to grasp. For many of these groups, they really don't know how to approach it and are concerned that too much pressure may make a tough issue more contentious.

I am appreciative of both sides of this situation. I know many landowners personally, I am an avid duck hunter and angler and I certainly understand that hunting lease holders don't want unfettered access by everyone. And, I get that most anglers are just trying to go where the fish are biting and aren't there to intentionally trespass or cause any intentional injury to the land. I think there are some very reasonable compromises that can be reached and I hope this task force can work closely to find those compromises.

My primary concern here is two-fold:

First, I am concerned about the potentially negative implications for coastal restoration efforts. I don't believe this dispute should impede coastal restoration efforts in any way. But there are some who are questioning if public dollars should be used to improve private lands that the public cannot even fish on in some cases. While I firmly believe that restoration efforts on private land or public land are beneficial for all who live, hunt and fish our coast, I do appreciate the frustration. It is my hope these issues can be resolved so that the focus can be getting the projects constructed as quickly as possible and to adjusting to the changes brought by these projects. Any delays in construction are potential threats to the health

of coastal fisheries, wildlife and communities. Sportsmen should be for coastal restoration. It's unfortunate that this conflict has raised doubt for some.

My second concern is the national perception of our state handles public resources. I believe our state department of Wildlife and Fisheries is an excellent agency that is leading the way in innovative fisheries management with its LACREEL program. I also believe the Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority is the best state agency in the country at advancing scientifically-sound habitat restoration projects and protecting coastal communities. All Louisianans should be proud. But we all know this state has a reputation for not always being the most politically transparent place, to put it mildly. And that reputation sometimes means national groups and companies throw up their hands and give up on Louisiana. We need those groups and companies to care about us and to want to do business with us.

We know that B.A.S.S. has decided that this conflict is not something they want affecting their tournaments. While some have been dismissive of that decision, I am very disappointed. Not only because of the lost tens of millions that a Bassmaster Classic brings, but because I firmly believe that having the classic in New Orleans in 2011 had a tremendous impact on us passing the RESTORE Act in Congress and reassuring the rest of the nation that our fisheries were open for business and our state had survived the oil spill and was recovering from Hurricanes Katrina, Rita, Gustav and Ike.

BASS contemplated not coming to New Orleans for that classic, about 6 months after the Macondo well had been capped, because of the perception that we were covered in oil. Turns out, it was arguably the best Bassmaster Classic in history. The largest stringer ever landed in a classic, and caught in the mouth of the Davis Pond Diversion, by the way. That Classic gave sportsmen's groups the opportunity to talk to media across the country and to the largest boat and tackle makers in the world to convince them that our state was okay, that people should come here to fish but also that Congress needed to direct oil spill penalties back to our state to help restore and protect the coast. Hundreds of outdoor businesses and thousands of individuals from across the country signed a letter to Congress urging passage of the Restore Act at that Classic and the one the next year in Shreveport. I firmly believe that support helped the Restore Act pass and helped assure people Louisiana was worth coming to.

We don't need this conflict to taint the national image of our hunting and fishing. It is arguably the greatest resource we have. And, again, I am not here to pick sides or to pick fights. I am here to encourage this task force to come to a reasonable compromise that eases this conflict. And I am here to offer my help in any way I can.

Thank you again for your time.