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Washington Mardi Gras festivities help fund coastal restoration in Louisiana

LABI Foundation donates \$50,000; Cheniere contributes \$100,000

Business leaders at a Washington, D.C., Mardi Gras luncheon last week donated \$50,000 to the Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana to fuel the organization's coastal restoration work. The money was raised through sponsorship of the Friday economic development luncheon, which was hosted by the Louisiana Association of Business and Industry ([LABI](#)). This was the first time the luncheon has had a philanthropic component. CRCL was selected as the beneficiary by Rep. Garret Graves, the chairman of the 73rd Washington Mardi Gras who conceived of the charitable aspect. More than 600 people attended the luncheon.

Separately, [Cheniere Energy](#) donated \$100,000 to CRCL last week to support the youth leadership development programs.

"We were proud to work with Congressman Graves to begin a new philanthropic tradition at Washington Mardi Gras," said LABI President and CEO Stephen Waguespack. "The work that CRCL does is critical to saving the Louisiana coast, and we're honored to do our part in forwarding their mission through this donation."

The money from the LABI Foundation donation will be used to fuel the work of CRCL, the first statewide nonprofit dedicated to coastal restoration in Louisiana. For more than 30 years, the organization has united business leaders, fishermen, elected officials, scientists, students and more behind one goal: ensuring that there is a thriving Louisiana coast for generations to come.

"We are grateful to Congressman Graves, LABI and the business leaders of our state who recognize the importance of restoring our coast," said Kim Reyher, the executive director of CRCL. "We are fortunate to have broad, bipartisan support for our work. Everyone agrees that we need to hold on to as much of our state as possible. These leaders recognize there are ways to help."

More than 2,000 square miles of Louisiana's wetlands have vanished since the 1930s. CRCL works to solve coastal land loss by advocating for science-based policies that will build new land; by undertaking on-the-ground restoration projects like planting marsh grasses or trees and by building oyster reefs with community partners, restaurants and volunteers; and by training the next generation of coastal leaders through its [Future Coastal Leaders](#) and [Student Ambassador](#) programs. The organization also hosts the State of the Coast conference and honors coastal stewards through an annual awards ceremony.

Cheniere presented the organization an [alligator-shaped check](#) during a meeting of the Committee of 100 of Louisiana, a business round table dedicated to the state's long-term economic growth. Gov. John Bel Edwards spoke during the presentation.

The donation from Cheniere will fuel CRCL's Future Coastal Leaders and Student Ambassador programs for the next two years.

"Cheniere's support of our youth development programs will help ensure we have strong and diverse leadership on solving coastal land loss for years to come," Reyher said. "What a brilliant investment in our future."

"Our commitment to CRCL's youth leadership development programs will empower students across Louisiana's coastal communities to learn and understand the uniqueness and importance of our state's coast," said Laura Ferrell, senior representative for government and public affairs at Cheniere. "We recognize the vital work that CRCL is doing with a diverse group of students and are proud to join them in this partnership."

To learn more about the Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana, visit the organization's [website](#).

[The Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana](#) is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to drive bold, science-based action to rebuild coastal Louisiana through outreach, restoration and advocacy. Incorporated in 1988, CRCL represents a unique mix of businesses, local governments, industries, scientific communities, national and local conservation groups, hunters, anglers and a broad spectrum of concerned citizens who all share a common vision and commitment to the sustainability of coastal Louisiana.