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CRCL announces winners of 14 Coastal Stewardship Awards

Gov. John Bel Edwards among recipients; three posthumous honors also will be presented

The Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana will present awards to 14 people or groups during its 27th annual [Coastal Stewardship Awards](#) on June 1 at the Ernest N. Morial Convention Center in New Orleans. Among the honorees are Gov. John Bel Edwards, Reggie Dupre, Donald and Theresa Dardar of the Pointe-au-Chien Indian Tribe and restaurateur Dickie Brennan. Three people will be honored with posthumous awards. They are: Ralph Libersat, Matt Sevier and Chuck Perrodin. The awards luncheon takes place on Day 2 of the [State of the Coast](#) conference. This year's awards are sponsored by Jones Walker.

Other award winners are: Arthur Johnson, Alisha Renfro and John D. Foret. Friend of CRCL Awards are being given to Chefs Brigade and Lindsay Allday. CRCL is also honoring its Volunteer of the Year, Clay Cavnac; and Youth Volunteer of the Year, Kylie Miller. CRCL, which was founded in 1988 as the first statewide nonprofit dedicated to coastal restoration in Louisiana, has presented the Coastal Stewardship Awards since the mid-1990s. The organization's mission is to unite people in action to achieve a thriving, sustainable Louisiana coast for all.

The CRCL Coastal Stewardship Awards are among the most prestigious honors for people working to protect and restore Louisiana's coast. The awards are intended to recognize the volunteers, students, researchers, sportsmen, governmental and business leaders and others whose leadership has been exemplary.

"We are excited to celebrate these coastal champions at State of the Coast," said Kimberly Reyher, CRCL's executive director. "If it seems like the restoration of Louisiana's coast is accelerating, it's because of people and organizations like this. Our coastal communities owe them a debt of gratitude, and presenting them awards is one of the highlights of our conference."

Gov. John Bel Edwards is Louisiana's 56th governor. Under his administration, the state's Coastal Master Plan has invested \$15.4 billion in coastal protection and restoration projects, benefiting over 32,000 acres of wetlands and 359 miles of levees. Another \$8 billion dollars is set to be invested in the future. Edwards also led the state to develop economy-wide policies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions through the Climate Initiatives Task Force.

Reggie Dupre is the former executive director of the Terrebonne Levee and Conservation District, where he oversaw flood control and hurricane protection projects. He also was an elected official, including on the Terrebonne Parish Council, in the Louisiana House of Representatives and as chairman of the Senate Natural Resources Committee. Reggie's legacy includes helping create the Louisiana Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority.

Arthur Johnson is the chief executive officer of the Lower 9th Ward Center for Sustainable Engagement and Development. Johnson was the leader of an environmental internship program for local youth. Also, with a number of nonprofit partners, he has helped maintain the platform overlooking the Bayou Bienvenue wetlands in the Lower 9th Ward of New Orleans. He serves on the governor's advisory commission on coastal protection.

Donald and Theresa Dardar are leaders in the Pointe-au-Chien Indian Tribe, an Indigenous tribal community in Terrebonne and Lafourche Parishes. In the aftermath of Hurricane Ida, the Dardars, a married couple, were involved in distributing essential supplies, rebuilding homes and other structures and advocating for their community. For more than 15 years, they have collaborated with Louisiana Sea Grant to research and promote coastal resilience and sustainability. They have also partnered with CRCL to protect their culturally significant mounds through the Oyster Shell Recycling Program.

Alisha Renfro is the science chair for Restore the Mississippi River Delta, a campaign of organizations advocating for restoration of Louisiana's coast. Renfro, who has a doctorate in sedimentology, has been featured in publications including Scientific American, Smithsonian and the International Times. Her ability to explain complex modeling reports has helped establish her as one of the leading authorities in her field.

Dickie Brennan, the owner of Dickie Brennan & Co., which operates several celebrated New Orleans restaurants, has long been a leader in the coastal restoration movement in New Orleans. He was one of the first restaurateurs to join CRCL's Oyster Shell Recycling Program, which collects shell that otherwise would go to a landfill and instead returns it to the water to act as a wave break that slows erosion and creates habitat for new oysters to grow. One of his restaurants, Bourbon House, has recycled nearly 2 million pounds of oyster shell alone. Brennan is also a member at large for Pontchartrain Conservancy.

John D. Foret, a biologist who works at C.H. Fenstermaker & Associates, has made significant contributions to the protection of the Gulf of Mexico shoreline. Foret was instrumental in securing construction funds for the CWPPRA ME-18 shoreline protection project, which has been successful in stopping coastal erosion and protecting Louisiana's delicate ecosystem. Foret has guided private stakeholders seeking to construct CWPPRA projects in their areas of need, ensuring that coastal restoration efforts are widespread and effective.

Chefs Brigade is a nonprofit organization comprised of 90 independent New Orleans and Gulf Coast restaurant partners. The organization aims to save waterways and preserve the seafood bounty of coastal Louisiana and the Gulf Coast. Chefs Brigade has sponsored smaller restaurants so they can participate in CRCL's Oyster Shell Recycling Program. The organization also operates Chefs on Boats, an immersive education experience that explores regional fisheries, exposing chefs and food service workers to the people, waterways, vessels, and environmental science that connect it all.

Lindsay Allday runs the largest oyster program in the region, is the electric treasurer of the Gulf Shellfish Farmers Association, and is active with Oyster South, the South's largest aquaculture advocacy group. Lindsay holds the title of oyster sommelier at Sidecar Patio and Oyster Bar, a member of the CRCL Oyster Shell Recycling Program. She is also a liaison to Chefs on Boats.

Kylie Miller, a freshman at Nunez Community College, is known among CRCL staff for her exceptional dedication to coastal stewardship. As a member of CRCL's Future Coastal Leaders program, Kylie has attended several volunteer events, both through school trips and in her free time. Kylie also attended the State of the Coast conference in 2021, demonstrating her passion for coastal conservation and restoration.

Clay Cavnac, a retired firefighter and native of Louisiana, he has become CRCL's most involved volunteer, attending 28 official volunteer days since April 2022. Clay also assists with site improvements at CRCL's headquarters and often takes on staff roles during large group events.

Ralph Libersat, a coastal restoration expert, dedicated his career to the protection and promotion of Louisiana's coastline. Over 27 years, he spearheaded \$89 million in projects in Vermillion Parish alone. These projects included the creation of levees, marshes and barrier islands, as well as the planting of vegetation.

Matt Sevier was a dedicated coastal expert who spent his career working for Shaw Coastal under many names, including APTIM, gathering vital information from Louisiana's living marsh. His work involved gathering data from the coast before the Coastwide Reference Monitoring System network existed, and he remained committed to making significant contributions to coastal restoration efforts. He also served as vice president of the Barataria-Terrebonne Estuary Foundation, where he worked toward the common goal of protecting Louisiana's natural resources.

Chuck Perrodin was the longest-serving public information officer of CPRA. He was a master storyteller who brought a sense of drama and showmanship to audiences in support of the agency's efforts to address the coastal crisis. Chuck's legacy lives on through his contributions to the LSU Center for River Studies, where his voice narrates the video at the single most accessible and educational location in the entire coastal program.

People registered to attend State of the Coast are invited to attend the Stewardship Awards as part of their participation in the conference. People who are not attending the conference but who wish to attend the awards event can [purchase tickets](#) for \$35.

A list of [previous Stewardship Award winners](#) can be found on CRCL's website.

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