

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## CRCL announces inaugural cohort for Coastal Leadership Institute

*Professional development program aimed at helping leaders become better advocates for restoration*

The Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana has announced the inaugural class in its Coastal Leadership Institute (CLI), a program that educates and empowers people to become more effective advocates for coastal restoration. CLI will feature an eight-session schedule, with events held at different locations across Louisiana's coast. The first session, "Ecology of the Coast, Part I," will be held Oct. 11 at the LSU Center for River Studies in Baton Rouge.

Subsequent sessions will be held in Plaquemines Parish, Terrebonne Parish, St. Bernard Parish, Lake Charles, Port Fourchon, St. Mary Parish and other locations. Participants will learn about the cultures and industries that are imperiled by land loss, the legislative process, the Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority and the state's Coastal Master Plan. They will also make valuable networking connections. Graduation will be held in June.

More information about the program is available [on the CRCL website](#).

"We are thrilled to welcome the inaugural cohort of our Coastal Leadership Institute, representing a broad spectrum of Louisiana's industries and regions," said Ethan Melancon, advocacy director at CRCL and leader of CLI. "The diversity of participation, both geographically and across sectors, highlights the collective commitment to safeguarding our coast. By bringing together leaders from various backgrounds, we are fostering the innovative, cross-disciplinary approaches that are essential to address the unique challenges and opportunities our coastal communities face."

Members of the cohort are:

- Jade Bergeron, cultural heritage and resiliency assistant coordinator at the Pointe-au-Chien Indian Tribe who lives in Montegut;
- Michelle McInnis, senior vice president at the SWLA Economic Development Alliance who lives in Lake Charles;
- Anna Nguyen, external affairs manager at the New Orleans Office of Resilience and Sustainability;
- Chad Pellerin, a retiree from New Orleans;
- Lana Henry, a self-employed writer and editor in Lafayette;
- Erik Paskewich, a New Orleans resident who is director of entrepreneurship at Propeller;
- Ella Gsell of Metairie, architectural historian at SWCA Environmental Consultants;
- Marlene Friis, a doctoral candidate at the Tulane University School of Medicine in New Orleans;
- Sadie Becnel, a Baton Rouge resident who is government affairs director and general counsel at the Louisiana Policy Institute for Children and who is a member of CRCL's Coastal Advisory Council;
- Amy Peavey of Metairie, an educator at Brother Martin High School;
- Ryan Van Dinter, a data visualization/analyst at the Louisiana Department of Health Bureau of Health Informatics in Baton Rouge;
- Sean M. Duffy Sr. of Kenner, president and CEO at Duffy Maritime Consultants;
- Paige Gisclair, program director at the Coastal Technical Assistance Center in Houma;
- Alissa Weinman of New Orleans, ocean program manager at the National Caucus of Environmental Legislators;

- Marny Stein of Destrehan, coastal zone management administrator at St. Charles Parish;
- Barbara Johnson of New Orleans, president and CEO of the Great Delta Tours;
- Maryann Miller, StayLocal program manager at the Urban Conservancy in New Orleans;
- Julie Stokes of River Ridge, founder and CEO/president at Ellevate Louisiana;
- Kim Montie, director of the Cameron Parish Port;
- Alex Boudreau of Baton Rouge, senior project manager for water resources at Duplantis Design Group;
- Justin West of Denham Springs, senior engineer at Wingate Engineers;
- Keesler Morrison of Baton Rouge, senior consultant at Emergent Method;
- Caroline Wendt of New Orleans, owner of Will Care Properties and The Retreat Salon;
- Alease Lee of New Orleans, ecological horticulturist and sustainability consultant who works at Littoralis Design Studio and the New Orleans Film Society.

People from across the state are welcome to apply for the Coastal Leadership Institute. Scholarships are available for a limited number of applicants.

Since its founding in 1988, CRCL has been a prominent advocate for science-based policy to restore and protect the state's coast, where about 2,000 square miles of wetlands have vanished in less than a century. Through its Oyster Shell Recycling Program, CRCL has recycled more than 14 million pounds of shell, keeping the resource out of landfills and using it instead to build reefs that create habitat for new oysters and that slow the rate of land loss.

The organization has planted more than 1 million trees and plants across Louisiana's coast through its Native Plants Program. CRCL also hosts the biennial State of the Coast conference, the premiere gathering on coastal restoration in the state, holds talks as part of its CRCLectures series and honors coastal leaders through its annual Coastal Stewardship Awards.

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

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*[The Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana](#) is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to unite people in action to achieve a thriving, sustainable Louisiana coast for all.*