

# RISING ABOVE SYMPOSIUM

Exploring Adaptation and Transformational  
Change Across the Louisiana Coast

November 30 - December 1, 2017  
Summary of Proceedings



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# Acknowledgments

## STEERING COMMITTEE

The Rising Above Symposium would not have been possible without the participation and support of community members, facilitators, participants, and sponsors. Our sincere thanks to those who generously gave their time and energy to the symposium discussions, especially the community members who were critical to ensuring discussions were locally relevant and grounded in the reality of life on the Louisiana coast:

### **Buras, Louisiana**

Kindra Arnesen, Commercial Fishing  
Richie Blink, Councilmember, Plaquemines Parish  
Sharon Branan, President, Productive Solutions and Consulting  
Foster Ceppel, Managing Partner, Woodland Plantation

### **Chauvin, Louisiana**

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South Louisiana Wetlands Discovery Center  
Dirk Guidry, Councilmember, Terrebonne Parish  
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### **Thibodaux, Louisiana**

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## PURPOSE

The Rising Above Symposium was a focused gathering of coastal community members, local and state officials, academics and practitioners committed to addressing Louisiana's coastal challenge, joined by international experts in the field of coastal adaptation. The Symposium began with the understanding that the challenges facing our coast go beyond reducing flood risk and include population movements, changing economies and shifting demographics that affect people's livelihoods, social networks, cultural assets, health, and wellbeing. The group spent two days developing a people-centered vision for the future of coastal Louisiana and recommendations for achieving that vision.

The Rising Above Symposium was designed and produced by the Center for Planning Excellence (CPEX) in partnership with members of the Louisiana communities of Buras, Chauvin, and Thibodaux and with support from Foundation for Louisiana, Greater New Orleans Foundation, Kresge Foundation, Walton Family Foundation, McKnight Foundation, and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).

## KEY FINDINGS

### Vision for the Future Coast

The vision created during the Symposium was focused on the future economy, sociocultural aspects, education, and governance of coastal communities. Participants collectively envisioned a future Louisiana coast characterized by:

- Living with water, understanding water as an asset, maintaining a sustainable footprint
- Serving as international model for restoration, protection, and adaptation
- Continued access to the Gulf and a dynamic southern boundary made of natural systems
- A planning process that is accepted and includes recognition of trade-offs
- Diversified economy and opportunities for residents including commercial fisheries and eco-tourism
- Strong sense of community and community engagement
- Educated and informed citizenry involved in decision-making that affects them
- Priorities for adaptation in Coastal Louisiana

### 1. Good Information

Coastal residents and communities need consistent, timely, quality information from all levels of government to make good decisions. This can be achieved through:

- More inclusive coastal planning processes
- Consistent messaging from all levels of government
- Expanding coastal curriculum in K-12 schools
- Expanding coastal restoration and water management workforce training programs
- Establishing trusted messengers in the community to have honest conversations and ensure residents have the information they need to make personal decisions and participate in community decisions

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## 2. Long-term Planning

Another major theme was a need for a stronger focus on the long-term impacts of land loss and climate change. Participants wanted long-term strategies for planning, adaptation, and accommodating growth in lower-risk areas and population decline in higher-risk areas.

## 3. Greater Collaboration

The need for broader, deeper coordination was called for among state agencies. Participants wanted to see integrated planning across sectors and services, and regional approaches to planning that cross boundaries between parishes as well as between municipalities and the parish. There were also calls for a more innovative governance structure for management and planning that approaches issues from a watershed or basin scale.

## NEXT STEPS

**CPEX has identified two key next steps for addressing many of the challenges identified at the Symposium:**

1. Bring key state agencies together in a workshop that will serve as a springboard for state agencies to begin the process of recognizing their stake in the coastal crisis and their roles in adapting to the challenges it presents.
2. Advance the CPRA Coastal Master Plan's Flood Risk and Resilience Program (FRRP) as a primary means to close the resilience gap. The nonstructural adaptations promoted by the FRRP – flood-proofing and elevating structures, voluntary buyouts – can reduce risk in the short-term while long-term structural protection and restoration projects are constructed.



# INTRODUCTION

The Rising Above Symposium was a gathering of coastal community members, local and state officials, academics and practitioners engaged in the current coastal challenge, and international experts in the field of adaptation who came together to discuss coastal adaptation, create a vision for the future of coastal Louisiana, and develop recommendations for achieving the vision.

*Adaptation (noun): The process of change by which we become better suited to our environment - usually in response to actual or expected changes - by moderating harm or taking advantage of beneficial opportunities.*

Due to the advanced state of land loss, coastal change, and community vulnerability, Louisiana is often referred to as “the canary in the coal mine” for future climate change scenarios elsewhere in the world. How communities adapt to coastal erosion, sea level rise, and more frequent and stronger storms will determine the future of the Louisiana coast. The challenges go beyond reducing flood risk and include adapting to population movements and changing economies and demographics. The collective response to Louisiana’s coastal crisis is not only critical to the people,

culture, and economy of Louisiana, but also to communities and states across the globe that will face similar challenges. Now and in the future, many people and organizations will look to Louisiana’s response and outcomes as they craft their own. The hope for this Symposium and the work that ensues is to contribute to the growing body of knowledge and best practices that address more than just risk reduction and help to avoid lessons learned the hard way. Louisiana’s working coast and coastal residents depend on it.

The Symposium was designed and hosted by the Center for Planning Excellence (CPEX) in partnership with members of the Louisiana communities of Buras, Chauvin, and Thibodaux. These three communities were chosen because each has a different risk profile and thus occupies a different position on the spectrum of challenges facing coastal Louisiana. From the highest risk areas to the lowest risk areas of the coastal zone, context is key to successful adaptation strategies. By engaging these three communities to explore the breadth and depth of the challenges they face and the types of strategies each views as their best path forward, the Symposium helped build context necessary for developing more comprehensive strategies for Louisiana’s coastal crisis.

## OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the two-day Symposium were to:

- Build a common understanding of the natural and built environments characteristic of coastal Louisiana, their challenges and strengths, and the future conditions to which they need to adapt.
- Create an opportunity for collaborative problem solving to address common issues across the coast and to address barriers at multiple levels (e.g. community, parish, regional).
- Expand and share learning by integrating different kinds of knowledge into adaptation strategies through the inclusion of a wide range of experts with different backgrounds and perspectives on issues facing the coast.
- Identify new opportunities for innovation and actions that advance the vision for the future of the three selected coastal communities.
- Build networks and develop relationships that traverse disciplines, geographic boundaries, cultures, and sectors.

# INTRODUCTION

## LINKS TO CURRENT EFFORTS

The facilitated conversations that took place during the Rising Above Symposium were designed to build on current efforts and established best practices in Louisiana. Two major efforts central to this work are the Louisiana Coastal Master Plan and the LA SAFE initiative.

Following Hurricanes Katrina and Rita in 2005, the Louisiana Legislature created the Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority (CPRA) and tasked it with developing, implementing, and enforcing a comprehensive coastal protection and restoration Master Plan. CPRA was also charged with developing a master plan to guide work toward a sustainable coast and serve as a guiding document for the agency. Developed using the best available science and engineering, the master plan directs efforts to sustain Louisiana's coastal ecosystems, safeguard coastal populations, and protect vital economic and cultural resources. The land loss and future flood risk projections in the master plan also provide the context needed to evaluate other activities in the coastal zone, including transportation, navigation and port projects, economic development, ground water management, and land use planning. For the purpose of the Symposium, the master plan provided important context for understanding the challenges facing each of the three participating communities.

Another key entity that helped lay the groundwork for the Rising Above Symposium is the Louisiana Office of Community Development – Disaster Recovery Unit (OCD-DRU), created after the Louisiana Recovery Authority (LRA) dissolved in 2010.

LRA spearheaded the first regional plan of its kind in Louisiana - Louisiana Speaks - in partnership with the Center for Planning Excellence. OCD-DRU later went on to provide \$8.9 million to communities across the state for citizen-led resilience planning projects, advancing the vision of the Louisiana Speaks plan. In 2016-2017, OCD-DRU developed Louisiana's Strategic Adaptations for Future Environments (LA SAFE) pilot program in collaboration with CPRA and with support from by the Foundation for Louisiana. This public-private partnership is a six-parish planning process engaging coastal communities in planning for their best possible futures. The LA SAFE planning process integrates planning expertise, science, and residents from six parishes most impacted by Hurricane Isaac in 2012. These parishes are facing the challenges of environmental change firsthand. The process is iterative, continually moving between outreach, engagement, research, and analysis. This type of process has the potential to fill Louisiana's resilience gap across the coast and was integral to the conversations held at the symposium.

LA SAFE and the Coastal Master Plan discuss resilience and adaptation at a coast-wide or parish-wide scale or in terms of large, engineered projects. The Symposium specifically engaged people from census-designated places and municipalities who are on the ground experiencing the coastal crisis every day. As community members shared their lived experiences and thoughts at the Symposium, their local perspective helped shape thinking about what happens at higher levels and larger scales and the implications at the local level.

### **Resilience Gap**

*The resilience gap is the difference between the current situation and the programs, projects, and policies needed to reduce risk and vulnerability and allow a place to bounce back to a socially acceptable level of functionality after a disaster or disruption. In Louisiana, the resiliency gap takes two forms: timing and scope. The former is the risk that coastal communities continue to face while waiting for structural protection and restoration projects to be constructed. The latter includes access to healthcare, economic opportunity, social networks, education, and adequate local capacity; it is a matter of recognizing that reducing vulnerability requires more than reducing flood risk.*

# THREE HORIZONS METHOD

## ADAPTATION

Adaptation is a continuous process of responding to ongoing changes. The current systems are the result of prior adaptations. As an intentional process, adaptation requires recognizing the shortcomings of the current system, having a vision for the future, and changing behavior or innovating in order to precipitate the desired change. However, adaptation is rarely a conflict-free or linear process. The challenges on the coast are complex and can make for difficult discussions and decisions.

## THREE HORIZONS METHOD

The Three Horizons method was employed to facilitate a productive discussion of adaptation in coastal Louisiana. Developed by professional facilitators as a way to envision change that is transformative rather than incremental or marginal, the method helps guide conversations about how to create change over time in a manner that takes into account diverse, complex issues and perspectives. Rather than focusing on single issues, the Three Horizons method encourages participants to take a holistic view of the challenges faced and guides them through the development of strategies for addressing those challenges. The method has been found to be an effective way to get groups to structure their thinking about the future in a way that allows them to envision multiple possibilities and therefore was considered an appropriate fit for discussing the diversity of adaptation needs and possible futures for the Louisiana coast.

For the Symposium, the Three Horizons method broke down the complex issues associated with coastal adaptation into manageable pieces, provided a structured approach for thinking about a desired future, helped explore and identify which current practices or behaviors are in conflict with the envisioned future, and showed how emerging trends can shape the future - for better or for worse. Most importantly, the Three Horizons approach helped identify what actions are needed to move participants towards a more sustainable future.

Three Horizons discussions view the future as emerging in three different horizons (Figure 1: Three Horizons map). Each horizon represents a different system, each with varying degrees of fitness to current conditions. In this framework, the horizontal axis represents time. The vertical axis is the "prevalence" of the system, such as the particular way in which something is done in society. This could be how decisions are made, the use of a particular technology, or particular values and beliefs. Over time, conditions change, and behaviors, strategies, and technologies become less effective and may even be ill-suited to address emerging and unforeseen challenges. The graphic showing the three horizons changing in prevalence over time is referred to as the Three Horizons map because it shows the desired shift from the current system (Horizon 1) to a desired future system (Horizon 3) by way of transition activities (Horizon 2).

# THREE HORIZONS METHOD

**Horizon 1** represents “business as usual,” or the current way of doing things. People rely on this system – the status quo - to be stable, but as conditions change it becomes less reliable and less effective. Over time, the dominance of Horizon 1 gives way to a new system or way of doing things; however, certain aspects of Horizon 1 will still be present in the future. This is important, as there are some things from the present that will be needed and should be preserved to simultaneously maintain continuity and facilitate change.

**Horizon 2** represents transition activities and innovations that help make the shift from Horizon 1 to Horizon 3. It involves trying out new things, investing differently, and basing decisions on a vision of the future. Some of these activities are already occurring. Others will be entirely new innovations. Importantly, these new innovations can help disrupt the status quo, creating space for the rapid emergence of the third horizon.

**Horizon 3** represents a fundamentally new way of doing things that has or will become instituted as the new “business as usual” that is better suited to current and future conditions rather than the habits of the past. Some aspects of Horizon 3 may already exist and can be thought of as pockets of the future in the present – these are often radically different ideas or innovations and often marginalized. But over time, they prove to be better fit to conditions and gain in prevalence.

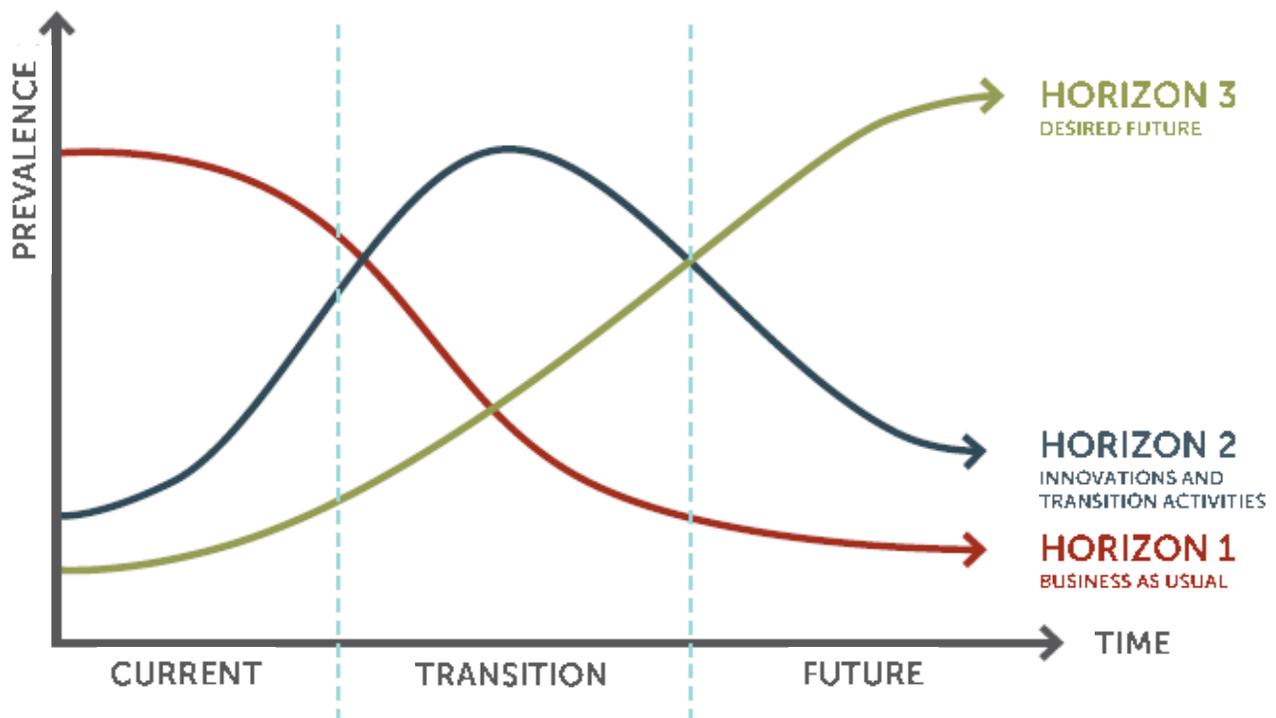


Figure 1: Three Horizons map.

# THREE HORIZONS METHOD

## THE THREE HORIZONS PROCESS IN ACTION

The method begins with the first horizon. Participants, typically organized and working in small groups that each report out to the whole group, consider the short-, medium-, and long-term challenges to a system. For the Rising Above Symposium, the system was coastal Louisiana. As each small group reports out a challenge, it gets added to a large (4'x6') poster of the Three Horizons map in the "current" column. The process repeats until each group is satisfied with the list of Horizon 1 challenges on the map.

The process continues with the third horizon. Each small group discusses the system of the future, one that is better suited to the world that is emerging. At the Symposium, the vision for the future of coastal Louisiana was developed with an awareness of increasing flood risk, rising sea levels, and coastal land loss. As each group reports out their Horizon 3 items they are added to the Three Horizons map in the "future" column. These items provide a snapshot of a desired future system.

Participants then move on to the second horizon with each small group discussing actions or innovations that can help address current challenges and spur a transition from Horizon 1 to Horizon 3. As each group reports out their ideas that will help make the transition from the current, unsustainable system to a future, sustainable system they are added to the Three Horizons map in the "transition" column. The process repeats until all ideas are on the map. This step usually takes longer than either the first or third horizon.

Once all three horizons have been discussed, participants are asked to return to the "current" column, but this time to view it through the lens of the third horizon. Referred to as "pockets of the future in the present," participants are again tasked with working in their small groups to identify current activities that complement the vision for the future. These items are placed on the third horizon in the "current" column and help participants recognize that innovations and new ideas are already occurring. Note, some expert facilitation is necessary to effectively consider whether the identified "pockets of the future in the present" really do help the transition to a new, sustainable system, or if they are attempts to preserve and prolong the current, unsustainable system.

The final step of the Three Horizons method is telling the story of the map, often referred to as the "B-Movie." The B-Movie is told from the point of view of the future, as if the group has successfully transitioned to a new, sustainable system and is recollecting how they came to be there. It is an effective way to summarize the Three Horizons mapping process, creates a sense of ownership of the map, highlights the actions needed to realize the vision it represents, and provides closure on how adaptation can lead to a brighter future.

# PRE-SYMPOSIUM WORK

## HOW COMMUNITIES WERE SELECTED

The shared work and learning that took place during the Symposium focused on three different Louisiana coastal communities: Buras, Chauvin, and Thibodaux. These communities were selected based on 1) their risk profile, 2) existing relationships with CPEX, and 3) their geographic location. Though only a short distance away from one another, each faces a unique set of challenges. Together, the three communities are representative of the spectrum of risk and the diversity of challenges facing the Louisiana coast. From high-risk places like Buras that must negotiate changing demographics, a smaller footprint, and declining investment; to moderate risk places like Chauvin that must plan for increasing risk and changing economies; to low-risk places like Thibodaux that must negotiate population growth and development to maintain quality of life and community character.

## COMMUNITY PARTICIPANTS

In preparation for the Symposium, a key figure in each community was identified. Key figures were elected officials or individuals active in advocating for their community: in Buras, a community organizer; in Chauvin, a councilman; and in Thibodaux, the mayor. Each key figure was interviewed at length to hear their concerns and hopes for the future. They were also asked to identify other engaged community members with unique perspectives on the challenges facing coastal Louisiana. These residents were interviewed to gain their perspective on the coastal challenge. They also participated in a community-specific focus group with the other key figures from their communities. This input was used to develop community snapshots that were included in the Symposium Participant Guide. These residents were essential participants in the Symposium, sharing their concerns, ideas, and aspirations for a resilient future with others in attendance.

The pre-Symposium interviews and community focus groups revealed the complexity of needs on the coast that will require well thought out strategies.

The interviews were also shared with Louisiana resident and world-renowned spoken word poet Chancellor Xero Skidmore to add a cultural component to the event. Xero drafted and performed a poem composed almost entirely of excerpts from the community member interviews that captured the concerns, hopes and dreams, and conflicting emotions of living in the coastal zone (Appendix A: Xero's Poem). In his recitation, Xero highlighted the range of emotions present in the three communities, capturing sense of place, ties to the land, sense of loss, and feelings of hope.

## INVITED PARTICIPANTS

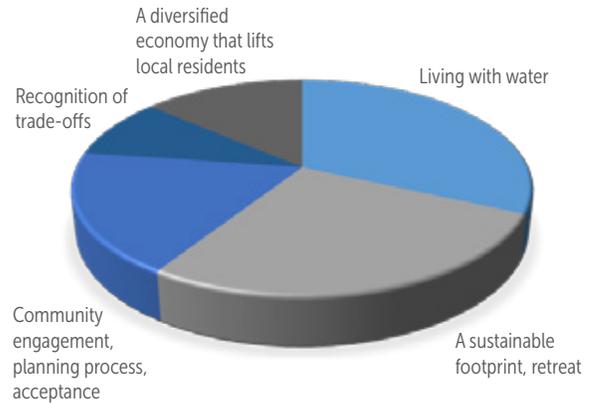
In addition to the community leaders and residents mentioned above, CPEX developed an invite list of individuals involved in coastal work to ensure a broad scope of perspectives (local, regional, and national) and expertise (science and engineering, legal, social science, and design) would be in attendance. This included local and state officials, subject matter experts and academics, federal agency representatives, and philanthropic organizations. Each invited participant was asked to give a brief interview. Interviewees were asked a uniform set of questions about current challenges, needed innovations, and their vision for the future of the coast. The questions were framed to correspond with the Three Horizons method to help prime participants for participation at the Symposium. Their answers were summarized and shared with all attendees to illustrate the diversity of perspectives in attendance, encourage dialogue, and to begin the process of thinking about the challenges facing the three communities and the coast as a whole (Figure 2: Invited Participant Interview Results).

# PRE-SYMPOSIUM WORK

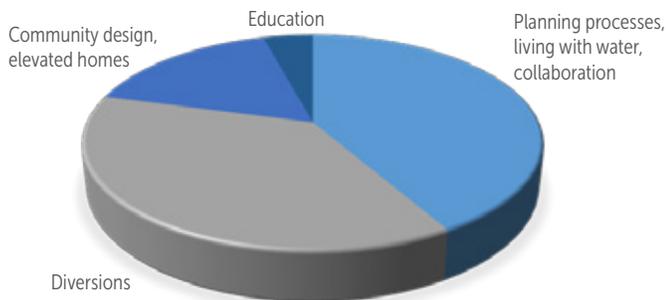
## What is the biggest challenge facing the coast?



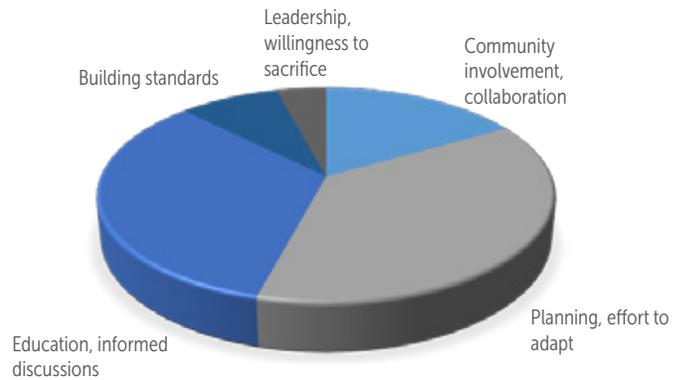
## What is your vision for a future coast?



## What is a current project/program/strategy that will be viable in 50 years?



## What do we need to see more of locally?



## What do coastal communities need most now?

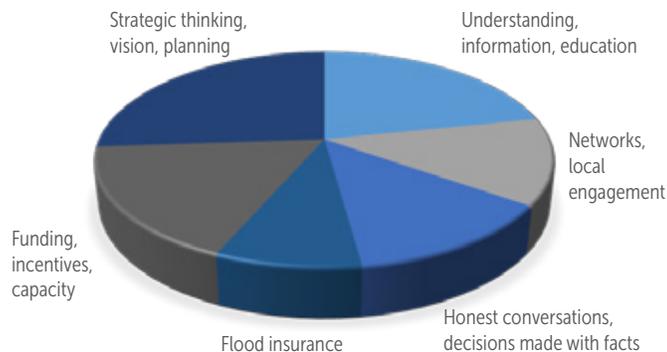


Figure 2: Invited Participant Interview Results

# THE SYMPOSIUM

## INTRODUCING THE COMMUNITIES

The Symposium began with introductions to the three featured communities from the perspective of community leaders. Each presenter was given 10 minutes and encouraged to talk about the past, present, and future of their community. For Thibodaux, Mayor Tommy Eschete and Levert Companies President Andy Andolsek talked about maintaining quality of life, economic drivers, and the difficulty of accommodating growth and developing responsibly in a changing landscape. For Chauvin, Terrebonne Public School Teacher Summer Skarke and Executive Director of the South Louisiana Wetlands Discovery Center Jonathan Foret discussed growing up in Chauvin and the importance of family, community, and local traditions along with their growing concern for rising water and changing community demographics and socioeconomics. For Buras, commercial fisheries advocate Kindra Arneson talked about the freedom of growing up in Buras and learning that hard work paid off but also how tropical storms, oil spills, land loss, and global seafood markets have drastically changed the face of Buras, resulting in socioeconomic challenges that go well beyond land loss and high flood risk.

## THREE HORIZONS

Participants then worked through the 3 Horizons process focusing on challenges (Horizon 1), opportunities and innovations (Horizon 2), and visions (Horizon 3) for the coast. Participants were pre-assigned tables to ensure each group had representation from multiple communities, levels of government, and area of expertise. This resulted in seven groups of 6-8 people, with each reporting after each iteration of the Three Horizons process to contribute to an overall 3 Horizons map. After several rounds discussing each of the Three Horizons, a preliminary map was created. This served as the foundation for each community's break-out work.

## COMMUNITY GROUP WORK

For the break out group, Symposium participants were divided into three predetermined groups, one dedicated to each of the three communities. They were tasked with further developing the Three Horizons maps for their specific community. This was intended to help tease out differences in adaptation needs across varying risk levels. The Three Horizons method provided an excellent framework for understanding different perceptions of and approaches to coastal challenges, needed innovations, and visions for the future. Each group worked through the process again in an effort to capture the challenges and visions for the future that were more specific to each community (as opposed to the more general coast-wide challenges and visions developed earlier). These were added to Three Horizons maps specific to each community.

## POCKETS OF THE FUTURE IN THE PRESENT

After each community group revisited the Three Horizons process separately, participants were brought back together and asked to identify "pockets of the future in the present." These are examples of innovations that are currently occurring on the coast and fit the vision for the future coast. That is, they are activities that will help make the shift from business as usual (Horizon 1) to the vision for the future (Horizon 3). This resulted in a completed Three Horizons map for the Symposium (Figure 3: Three Horizons Map Results).

## ACTION PLANNING

Following the development of the Three Horizons map, the development of action plans helps establish a sense of purpose and a basic understanding of the steps needed to promote successful adaptation. The three community groups reconvened to build out action plans for implementing 3-5 innovations or ideas (Horizon 2) of their choosing. The action plans were structured around the following questions: "Who needs to be involved?" "What needs to happen?" "Where do things need to happen?" "How do we get started?" And "Who will take it forward?"

# THE B-MOVIE

The “B-Movie” told the story of the Three Horizons map for adaptation in coastal Louisiana and helped condense the various discussions that occurred over the two days into a larger pattern. Told from the point of view of the Third Horizon, the B-Movie was presented to the rest of the group by Jonathan Foret and Summer Skarke:

*“The water’s high! I remember how fearful everyone was of changing the way we do things and people were worried about not having clear information. But we have that now after going to the Rising Above Symposium workshop that showed us how to think about moving forward. There was so much uncertainty and a lack of vision. Back then we didn’t know what the map of coastal Louisiana would look like now - it didn’t exist - but we had to make sure everyone had knowledge of what we were facing. People were scared and only thought of coastal threats, so we thought of things to put in place. The Symposium changed the way we viewed those threats and we started seeing opportunities.*

*Once we started thinking that way, we realized we were already implementing things on small scales. For example, Jonathan championed the Wetland Discovery Center, which teaches students about the importance of Louisiana’s wetlands, and the Greater New Orleans Foundation*

*awarded him an \$8 million grant! And the fear and uncertainty that people were suffering from was lessened as trusted community members were used to more clearly communicate information on risk and opportunity.*

*I remember one moment when a woman shared a story about her mother. She was at a place in her life where she was considering moving into a retirement home. The question was whether she was going to wait to go until wheelchair-bound or would she go when she was still able to move and get established? It made me think of our coastal challenges: we could wait until crippled, or we could make plans to make things better where we are now and be more prepared for what is to come. This allowed us to fix some things and prepare for the changes that were coming.*

*So by moving into the second horizon and thinking innovatively, it allowed us to get to where we are today. We are now an international model of coastal resilience where people come to learn from us. They learn how to deal with sea level issues and coastal change in other places – and it was all possible because we got the funding we needed to push us into the 2nd Horizon, which made where we are now a possibility. Now when you see a map of Louisiana, you see Chauvin, and people come to see what we did to save our people. We figured out how to make water an asset and not a threat.”*



# HORIZON 1

## Sociocultural

- There are significant mental health challenges associated with our coastal issues
- Cultural disparities and the loss of culture
- Inclusivity and equity
- Cultural differences about living with water
- Fear of change – desire to stay with what is familiar
- Recognizing the need/reality of a new map – i.e. how and where people can live
- Distrust of government
- False sense of security
- Resistance to change, anger and mistrust
- Residents strong sense of individualism can work against them
- People will be stranded and left behind
- 57% population of Buras is gone
- Variety of housing elevations
- Socioeconomically vulnerable populations are exposed
- “The Water is High” - water is rising
- False sense of security from the levees being there
- Area degrading making the cost of living higher for Thibodaux residents
- There is a false sense of security – especially with flood insurance

## Education/Capacity/Understanding

- Understanding relative sea level rise
- Technical assistance at community level for federal/state programs
- Clear information on coastal situation and the acceptance of a new map
- Adaptation is not seen as an opportunity, it is seen as a threat
- Ensuring everyone has necessary information to participate in decisions
- Understanding the limitations of the Master Plan – it’s not the answer to save us
- Flooding lasts longer, people are noticing but don’t get bigger picture of what it means

## Complexity/Scope/Scale of challenge

- Managing the interconnectivity/complexity of the system
- Resources don’t match the scale of the problem
- Difficult to relate to the sheer scope and scale of the challenge
- Telling the truth in models and planning for worst case scenario
- The uncertainty of the future and the current lack of vision for the coast
- Need additional research to ID solutions
- Significant differences in the challenges and opportunities facing coastal communities
- What is the transition for property on the coast?
- How do you tell people they can’t live in a place or tell them they live at their own risk?
- Currently both a resettling and a receiving community
- Large cone of uncertainty regarding the future
- Levee construction is profitable for some but what about long term benefits?
- Flooding during rain events (inside levees) – cannot pump it out fast enough
- “Bubble in a bubble” – levees within levees
- Flooding moving north, town by town
- Flood gates have to be closed many days a year due to relative sea level rise
- Drainage not coordinated between Thibodaux and surrounding communities

## Barriers

- Flood insurance is too expensive – impacts mobility and patterns of movement
- Profit reinforces the status quo
- Post-disaster recovery is not structured to help communities adapt
- There is not a central funding source for restoration
- There is a lack of political will to do what is needed
- Collectively we have looked the other way on industrial activities

- There is a lack of discussion around the conflict between restoration and levees
- Lack of property title or clouded title (housing)

## Decision-making/Governance

- Different scales of government have different priorities
- Disconnect between policies and people they impact
- Decision making is set up to repeat past processes
- Federal response is reactive, not proactive
- Political timing, in short term “fixes,” and the lack of a plan beyond the next election
- Ability to work with various risks and solutions among communities
- Regulations are not coordinated with risk signals
- Historical distrust of local government
- Lack of Parish engagement
- Zoning varies and areas without it don’t want it; many may not know how it works
- Need to coordinate regulations and risk signal

# HORIZON 2

## Sociocultural

- Build on pioneering spirit
- Preserve cultural inventory of community

## Economy/Livelihood

- Diversify local economies
- Program development for job skill diversification
- New Economies: Eco-tourism, Aquaculture, Restoration, nutrient harvesting
- Improved access to jobs: transportation, freshwater
- Small business loans
- Fund marketing campaign for seafood
- Retrofit vacant land to scrub carbon
- New permanent housing solutions
- Consolidated, denser communities on higher ground
- Home elevation kits
- Repurpose borrow pits for safe harbors/aquaculture
- Capturing economic value of productive, sustainable ecosystem
- People stay in the community but in a safer location
- Think about jobs when implementing projects for restoration or protection
- Expand aquaculture, utilize skills residents already have
- Turn seafood into Cajun meals to be sold
- Branding/marketing of local seafood and products
- Build new ecosystems; educate people and use them for tourism
- Incentives to rehab existing housing - fast track permitting or fee discounts
- Embrace density
- Position Nichols University as driving research, innovation and education/training

## Education/Capacity/Understanding

- Establish trusted messengers in the community
- Honest conversations about risk and mental health support
- Use lessons learned elsewhere and apply to Louisiana
- More inclusive coastal planning for restoration/environmental impact assessment
- Expand coastal curriculum K-12, mandatory wetland curriculum
- Workforce training statewide exposure to emerging career paths
- Articulate the advantages and disadvantages of adaptation options
- Plan for what happens during/after the next storm
- More community engagement
- Be as realistic as we can be about the future; tell people, tell students
- Be honest about what we know and what we don’t - build trust

## Complexity/Scale/Scope of Challenge

- Start letting water through the levee
- Define southern boundary
- What are the right levels and types of assistance?
- Use green infrastructure to manage/slow down water
- Manage sub-basins between bayous as whole system - new ecosystems
- "La Cache Basin Project" (entire basin, not just lower area)
- Adaptive re-use of parcels/structures when people take buy-outs
- Keep dynamic system in place, not just levees (multiple lines of defense)
- Maintain, grow investments and resources to provide sense of community
- New people moving in to community, need to develop wisely

## Overcoming Barriers

- Pilot programs: insurance, environmental regulations, permitting standards
- Enabling creative reuse of existing assets
- Redesigning infrastructure for access
- Financial assistance for adaptation

## Decision-making/Governance

- Regionally-based, dynamic zoning and coding; flexible and responsive
- Integrated planning across sectors and services with coastal sustainability
- Change how we manage and avoid risk – pilot efforts
- Coast-wide planning process scaled to include local to regional interests
- Regulatory changes to permitting, development codes, design standards
- Innovative governance structure – watershed based for mgmt. and planning
- Develop reasonable options with people
- Greater local decision-making capacity
- Align capital planning with adaptation planning
- Identify "triggers" or tipping points for when community will take action
- Incorporate quality of life projects in restoration and protection projects
- Master Planning LA 20 corridor to jumpstart revitalization
- Fostering improved relationships between parish and municipality
- Leverage state and regional resources to address infrastructure issues

- *Pocket of future: Jobs related to culture (e.g. new meat business in Houma)*
- Nicholls and medical community provide research and services to coast
- Diversified economy with coastal restoration
- *Pocket of future: Dock to table Delcambre Direct Seafood*
- *Pocket of future: Propeller: incubator for water mgmt. and coastal business*

## Education/Capacity/Understanding

- Coast is international model for restoration, protection, and adaptation
- Sustainable but dynamic southern boundary through natural systems
- We recognize the spectrum and value of wet areas of the coast
- *Pocket of future: LA SAFE (Example of informing and sharing information)*
- *Pocket of future: Fletcher CC is developing curriculum for coastal restoration*

## Complexity/Scope/Scale of challenge

- Floating, movable infrastructure (post office, schools, hospitals)
- Air and water-based transport
- Vibrant, functional working coast
- Sustainable environment and practices
- Infrastructure is keeping up with growth
- *Pocket of future: Integrated lock and levee systems (buy time as we adapt)*

## Decision making/governance

- Communities involved in decision-making and decisions that affect them
- Regional cooperation and leadership is flourishing
- *Pocket of future - LA SAFE (engagement, planning and decision-making)*
- *Pocket of future: NO Urban Water Plan, Gentilly and Gretna Resilience Dist.*

# HORIZON 3

## Sociocultural

- Acceptance that water is an asset and not a threat
- A sense of community (safety, family, heritage, culture, love)
- Educated and informed citizenry
- Living with water as part of a dynamic system
- Historic assets have been preserved (Buras)
- Use population influx and retain graduates to revitalize some areas of town
- Affordable housing is available
- Quality of life projects are funded!

## Economy/Livelihood

- Coastal cities (Houma/Belle Chase/Thibodaux) are tech and intellectual hubs
- Access to gulf maintained (still a working coast)
- Diversified economy
- Coastal-based, sustainable livelihoods
- Coast is biggest eco-tourism destination in the world
- Sustainable fisheries, ability for fishermen to live where they work
- State is invested in commercial fishing
- Vibrant, functional working coast, including temporary workers

## LEGEND

- Black= Coast-wide Items
- Red= Buras Group Additions
- Blue= Chauvin Group Additions
- Green= Thibodaux Group Additions

# DISCUSSION

**The Rising Above Symposium was a unique conversation about the diversity of adaptation needs across the Louisiana coast and their relevance to local and regional planning needs.** Though the conversation started with a focus on the challenges facing the coast, it was a forward-looking discussion that worked to identify opportunities that exist as many communities move into an uncertain future. With sea level rise and coastal land loss a given, what does that mean for coastal communities? What will those communities look like in the future? How will they function? How will adaptation strategies play out across the coast? Those are just a few of the fundamental questions explored during the two day Symposium.

Grouping and categorizing items from the Three Horizons map resulted in an interesting finding: Horizon 1 had many sociocultural challenges and Horizon 3 had several sociocultural visions for the future, but very little in Horizon 2 addressed these concerns. In fact, it was only the Buras group that provided any distinctly sociocultural strategies for Horizon 2. Further, Horizon 2 was dominated by economy and livelihood strategies, with each community group providing several additional strategies to their Three Horizons maps. It is likely that participants intuitively understood that economic opportunity is necessary to sustain culture. Culture - including sense of place, traditions, and concepts of community – is an

emergent phenomenon that is maintained and strengthened through relationships, but a lack of economic opportunity will drive people to seek it elsewhere, disrupting the relationships necessary to sustain culture. This perhaps explains why “Economy and Livelihood” does not surface as a category until Horizon 2 - participants understood it to be a means to an end for preserving those aspects of their community they value most.

There were clear differences in tone and content in the Horizon 2 strategies for each community. For high-risk Buras, proposed strategies were characterized by a sense of urgency calling for innovation and action, including ideas for adaptive re-use, new housing and community design, and pre-disaster planning. For moderate risk Chauvin, proposed strategies called for protecting, conserving, and enhancing natural assets and expanding the scope of ongoing programs and projects to provide multiple benefits, including economic opportunities. For lower-risk Thibodaux, anticipating an influx of population, strategies focused on managing growth and retaining community character while accounting for future flood risk. Consideration of the spectrum of risk across these three communities resulted in development of a broad range of adaptation strategies and needs.

# THREE EMERGENT THEMES

## GOOD DECISIONS REQUIRE GOOD INFORMATION

The first theme was the inability of coastal residents and communities to make good decisions without good information.

- One resident discussed how the parish administration sent out a tweet saying the parish was not going to lose another foot of land while at the same time the fire department sent out a tweet identifying roads that were currently flooded. This led to confusion as to why flooding seemed to be getting worse if the parish was not losing any land.
- Another resident spoke of hearing through the grapevine that there would be a mandatory evacuation the following morning in anticipation of hurricane landfall but never receiving word to confirm or deny until the mandatory evacuation order was given.

These stories brought to the forefront the importance of consistent messages from all levels of government that acknowledge the changes that have occurred and are occurring in coastal Louisiana. At the Symposium, this was phrased as the importance of recognizing the reality of a new map, a map that needs to be used when making decisions and planning for the future. The Horizon 2 strategies for addressing the challenge of local residents having “good information” manifested in several ways:

- More inclusive coastal planning processes
- Consistent messaging from all levels of government
- Expanding coastal curriculum in K-12 schools
- Expanding coastal restoration and water management workforce training programs
- Establishing trusted messengers in the community to have honest conversations and ensure residents have the information they need to make personal decisions and participate in community decisions

**One community member in attendance at the Symposium summed it up succinctly with the question: “How am I supposed to do what is best for my family, for my kids, if I don’t know what is happening around me?”**

## COMPLEX CHALLENGES REQUIRE MORE COLLABORATION

A second theme that emerged from the Three Horizons process was the recognition of the complexity of the coastal challenge and the need for greater collaboration in addressing the challenge. There were repeated calls for integrating planning across sectors and services to ensure coastal sustainability is considered in every investment and project. The call for greater collaboration included regional approaches to planning that cross parish boundaries as well as within parishes between municipalities and the parish. The need for broader, deeper coordination was also extended to state agencies. Participants expressed the need for regionally-based, dynamic zoning and coding that is flexible and responsive to the changing coastal landscape. There were also calls for a more innovative governance structure for management and planning that approaches issues from a watershed or basin scale.



# THREE EMERGENT THEMES

## SUCCESSFUL ADAPTATION REQUIRES A LONG-TERM FOCUS

A final major theme was a need for a stronger focus on the long-term impacts of climate change. Richie Blink, a community organizer from Buras, compared the current situation in Buras to a popular board game: “It’s like the game of Monopoly on a large scale in reverse ... we need to be smart about how we pick up the pieces. We can be smart about how we do this or we can just let it happen. We need to keep the quality of life up for as many people as we can, and I think we need to be very strategic with how we do that.”

This idea was also seen as relevant to coastal areas that are growing, such as Thibodaux, and the need to be strategic about how the pieces are put back down—that is, how the city accommodates growth. There is currently no plan for receiving areas. Municipalities like Thibodaux can craft their own policies and regulations to help manage the influx of residents, but unincorporated communities must rely on Parish-wide policies to manage growth or decline. The Thibodaux group identified the need to adopt a proactive focus on mitigating long term challenges. The Chauvin group recommended the identification of tipping points – such as a specific amount of relative sea level rise – to serve as a trigger for when to take different actions at the community level. The Buras group recommended working with the community to develop reasonable adaptation strategies for the future by planning for what happens after the next storm.

## THREE HORIZONS THINKING FOR THE LONG TERM

Perhaps the best testament to the impact of the Symposium is an example of how the discussions and forward thinking continued after the event. Two community members from

Chauvin, Jonathan Foret and Summer Skarke, brought their Symposium experience home and used it to address their concerns regarding the loss of cultural traditions they are experiencing. In Jonathan’s words:

*“After the Rising Above Symposium, Summer and I realized that we had to start getting people to think in terms of what they should be doing in Horizon 2 so that Horizon 3 could become the reality that future generations could enjoy in Chauvin. So we compiled a list of names of people we felt are true leaders in Chauvin. These folks aren’t necessarily the people of political or financial power in the community, but are people that are well respected in Chauvin. These people are the right humans, but we had trouble getting these people to attend meetings because they had other obligations. So Summer and I set up times to go to their houses. We brought king cake, and we had very fruitful conversations on what the residents of Chauvin wanted to see. During the same time frame, I was meeting with members of the Louisiana Folklore Society to discuss ways they could help the people of Chauvin make their culture more resilient in light of the changing landscape. It was decided that the Louisiana Folklore Society’s annual meeting would be held in Houma with a field trip to Chauvin. During the field trip, we were able to introduce the academics from the Folklore Society to the tradition bearers in the community. It was magical. The next day, there was a facilitated meeting between the academics and community members to discuss how to move traditions forward and reclaim some traditions that are beginning to fade. Both sides of the conversation voiced their commitment to work together, and future meetings are already in the works. Two ideas we are planning to develop are ways to reconnect people in Chauvin with the disappearing Louisiana French language and working to use the history of the region to empower residents to create options for their future rather than accept being the victim of a changing landscape. We plan to use the Rougarou Fest as a vehicle to do some of this work where we can celebrate who we are as a people and keeping our culture and heritage at the forefront.”*

# NEXT STEPS

**CPEX has identified two key next steps for addressing many of the challenges identified at the Symposium:**

1. Bring key state agencies together in a workshop that will serve as a springboard for state agencies to begin the process of acknowledging their stake in the coastal crisis and their role in adapting to the challenges it presents. Participants from all sectors made clear that there is a need for state agencies to take a more active role in their approach to compliance with the Coastal Master Plan and that agency roles may need to be explicitly defined in the Master Plan. Other Horizon 1 challenges this can help address include 1) the apparent disconnect between policies and the people they impact, 2) the belief that current decision-making frameworks are set up to repeat past processes, and 3) the need to de-silo organizations and agencies. The coastal crisis is a long-term problem, but political timing is not conducive to addressing long-term needs. Short-term fixes are good for the next election, but often do not get to the root of the problem. **Coordinating agency actions and establishing policies that proactively support the Coastal Master Plan can allow career experts not concerned with the next election cycle to carry them forward. This would help address the complexities of the coastal crisis by encouraging consistent messaging and information from all state agencies and greater collaboration in addressing coastal challenges, and help establish and maintain a long-term focus.**

2. Advance the CPRA Coastal Master Plan's Flood Risk and Resilience Program (FRRP) as a primary means to close the resilience gap. The nonstructural adaptations promoted by the FRRP – floodproofing and elevating structures, voluntary buyouts – can reduce risk in the short-term while long-term structural protection and restoration projects are constructed. Supporting the FRRP and advancing its progress can help coastal residents recognize the reality of a new map and the importance of making decisions based on future projections. Through the provision of technical assistance, the FRRP can address a lack of capacity, allowing parishes to make requests to aid communities in their efforts to adapt. Lower flood risk through the nonstructural adaptations of the FRRP can aid in maintaining social networks and economic opportunity, and can help residents and coastal communities see the opportunities inherent in adaptation. **In all, the FRRP must be seen as a necessary tool for managing the interconnectivity and complexity of the state's long-term coastal challenges.**



# APPENDIX A: XERO'S POEM

## WATERY HOPES AND DIRTY PLANS BY CHANCELIER "XERO" SKIDMORE

I was born and raised in Thibodaux  
My momma's maiden name was Chauvin  
Empire wasn't a very bad place for me to grow up  
I wouldn't want to live anywhere else  
I grew up fishing and going to church  
I teach English in the same classroom I learned English in  
I was planning on living my whole life here

Everybody knew everybody  
The faces have changed  
My parents live out of the country now  
The people of means moved to higher ground  
Elevation is key  
We see people coming from lower lying areas  
People from other places that don't get the culture  
Indians and Chinese taught us how to live here  
We moved up in the food chain of life  
But we didn't look back  
Nobody lives in the house after their parents die  
My next home should be a condo in the cemetery  
My generation is the last

You had to be a good storyteller  
I learned it at my grandma's kitchen table  
Before we evacuated she kissed the door  
I think everyone has to keep an open mind  
It's a trade-off, but the city's gonna come out of top  
The city has a master plan  
Hope is not a plan

Keep an open mind  
I feel like I'm pretty well rooted here  
I have a decent-sized property down here  
When my grandmother was a kid it was cotton fields,  
When I was a kid it was cattle  
Now we hunt ducks  
Now we hunt hope  
In areas that have converted to open water  
To think, you might not ever be able to stand  
On the place you always stood  
I like people to see where we stand

Our French is a dying language  
We put our money where our mouths are  
That work sometimes is a money grab  
30% of the nation's oil comes through here,  
and I wonder why they haven't done anything  
to figure out the erosion hope they figure it out

While some developers use the streets as drainage features  
Dry house, can't leave property  
Tax base declined  
Not enough money to maintain public property  
The floodgate is public property  
A huge wall protecting one community  
And leaving the other to hope for itself  
They're going to flood us out to save the town

Katrina and Rita, and then you had Gustav and Ike  
I forget the order  
I get confused with the hurricanes  
I always say the wrong one  
I always hope the wrong plan  
Trying to get a permit to rebuild the levee back to existing  
height  
Finally, after two years, they told us we don't need a permit  
We need a plan

I know this one particular statue  
It's this little girl kneeling on the ground  
Looking into a pool of water and you can see her reflection  
That little girl, each year, is more and more in the water  
And I don't know if we can get the toothpaste back in the tube  
Elevation is keys to new doors  
I buy flood insurance, but poverty is relative  
Thibodaux needs to maintain its employment source  
But how do you keep the bodies?  
People of means moved to higher ground  
Erosion of culture  
Was planning on living  
Hope is not a plan

Water at my doorstep  
I once stood outside two days with a gun  
To stop cars from creating waves  
It is a relatively safe community  
Poverty is relative, but not a plan either  
If you lived here, would you be looking to move?  
Is that adaptation?  
Plans are adapting  
Adapting is relocating  
My generation is the last

I remember she kissed the door before we left  
I was planning on living my whole life here  
She said, "What if we don't come back?"  
Would this just be open water?  
Is hope an open door?  
A door we don't want to kiss good-bye?  
I was planning on living my whole life here  
Now I'm just hoping

# APPENDIX B: AGENDA

Time	Activity
8:30-9:00am	Check-in and light breakfast
9:00 – 9:10am	Welcome - <i>King Milling and Matthew Block</i>
9:10 – 9:20am	Symposium Objectives
9:20 – 9:55am	Agenda, Ground Rules, and Introductions
9:55 – 10:25am	Stories from the Communities
10:25 – 10:40am	<b>Break</b>
10:40 – 10:50am	Introduction to 3 Horizons
10:50 – 11:40am	Exploring the 1 <sup>st</sup> Horizon: Difficulties and Challenges
11:40 – 12:30pm	Exploring the 3 <sup>rd</sup> Horizon: A Vision for the Future
12:30 – 1:15pm	<b>Lunch</b>
1:15 – 2:05pm	Exploring the 2 <sup>nd</sup> Horizon: Innovations for a Future Coast
2:05 – 2:15pm	Telling the Story of the 3 Horizons Map
2:15 – 2:35pm	<b>Break</b>
2:35 – 3:15pm	Clarifying the 1 <sup>st</sup> and 3 <sup>rd</sup> Horizons for Buras, Chauvin, and Thibodaux
3:15 – 4:30pm	Community Based Horizon 2 Innovations
4:30 – 4:40pm	<b>Break</b>
4:40 – 5:15pm	Report Out: Community 3 Horizons Maps

# APPENDIX B: AGENDA

Time	Activity
8:45am	Arrival
9:00 – 9:05am	Welcome, Review of Agenda for Day 2
9:05 – 9:50am	Exploring Tensions in the 3 Horizons Map
9:50 – 10:00am	Break, Convene Breakout Groups
10:00 – 11:00am	Create Community Action Plans
11:00 – 12:00pm	<b>Brunch</b>
12:00 – 12:30pm	Community Action Plan Report Out
12:30 – 1:45pm	Implications and Reflections on the 3 Horizons Maps
1:45 – 2:00pm	Closing Remarks

## SYMPOSIUM OBJECTIVES

- Provide an opportunity for collaborative problem solving to address common issues across the coast and to address barriers at multiple levels
- Build a common understanding of natural and built environment of coastal Louisiana, its challenges, its strengths, and the ways in which it needs to adapt to future conditions and characteristics
- Share learning by integrating different kinds of knowledge through the inclusion of a wide range of experts with different backgrounds and standpoints
- Identify new opportunities for innovation and taking actions towards the vision for the future of three coastal communities
- Build networks and develop relationships

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