

PONTCHARTRAIN BEACH IMPROVEMENT PLAN

**Prepared for the Committee to Improve
Pontchartrain Beach by:**

The Lake Pontchartrain Basin Foundation

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Pontchartrain Beach is both currently utilized and historically romanticized by the citizens of the New Orleans region and beyond. A recreational area since the 1800s, Pontchartrain Beach was created in New Orleans on the south shore of Lake Pontchartrain to encourage swimming, fishing, boating, sun bathing, picnicking and general relaxation. Although Lake Pontchartrain endured many years of poor water quality, lake waters have improved significantly. Due to increasing usage of the beach and the multiple types of uses exhibited daily, it became evident that changes were necessary to provide quality experiences for beachgoers.

A planning process ensued motivated by the Lake Pontchartrain Basin Foundation, the Mayor's Office of Environmental Affairs, the Young Leadership Council and the University of New Orleans, College of Urban and Public Affairs. This group coordinated the Committee to Improve Pontchartrain Beach, comprised of 22 members from government, citizen, academic and non-profit organizations. The committee created and conducted a public participation process to ensure that improvements would be based on the public's vision of Pontchartrain Beach. Over 100 members of the public participated in a series of publicly held and professionally facilitated meetings where participants spoke, wrote and illustrated their vision. Those who could not attend the meetings provided their comments by email or through survey interviews.

The public vision of Pontchartrain Beach in addition to the expertise of the committee ultimately resulted in a "Basic Conceptual Design" (See Figure 2, page 9). This conceptual design illustrates the working vision that resulted from the planning meetings: "We envision Pontchartrain Beach as a natural environment with basic amenities provided and maintained." From the vision, an Action Plan with goals, objectives and actions was created. The Action Plan focuses on four main types of improvements: natural physical; built physical; access/transportation; and security/safety. The following goals summarize planned improvements of the Action Plan:

Natural Physical Improvements:

- Goal 1: Enhance the sand areas of the beach.
- Goal 2: Protect and enhance wildlife habitat.
- Goal 3: Manage water quality at Pontchartrain Beach.

Built Physical Improvements

- Goal 4: Enhance and control beach access.
- Goal 5: Address solid waste.
- Goal 6: Provide basic amenities.
- Goal 7: Improve tennis court area.
- Goal 8: Enhance dog-friendly environment.
- Goal 9: Encourage the separation of motorized boats and swimmers.
- Goal 10: Improve structures extending from the beach into Lake Pontchartrain.
- Goal 11: Address the Ragin' Cajun building.

Access/Transportation Improvements:

Goal 12: Improve user access.

Goal 13: Improve emergency vehicle access.

Security/Safety Improvements:

Goal 14: Improve the beach for swimming safety.

Goal 15: Secure and maintain improvements.

A strategy addressing governance, funding, scheduling and outreach activities has been established to ensure quality and timely implementation of the Action Plan. The Orleans Levee District owns and maintains the property known as Pontchartrain Beach. The University of New Orleans is the leaseholder of Pontchartrain Beach. Alternatives to the existing governing arrangement were developed and evaluated. The plan recommends that the lease be returned to the Orleans Levee District and the committee lead Action Plan implementation until or if a non-profit agency specific to Pontchartrain Beach or the Louisiana State Parks system replaces the committee.

From January 2005 through June 2005, a Feasibility and Cost Analysis will be conducted to understand the funding needs to implement the Action Plan. This analysis will supply short term and long term funding requirements, which will in turn provide the ability to schedule each action item.

To ensure continued support of the Pontchartrain Beach Improvement Plan, outreach activities will be conducted. Beach events, informational brochures, press releases, educational activities, signage and continued government and private industry partnership creation are significant aspects of outreach planning.

Pontchartrain Beach is an asset that must be preserved, enhanced and maintained today and in the future. The Pontchartrain Beach Improvement Plan provides a guide based upon the public's vision of one of the best points of access to Lake Pontchartrain. The Committee to Improve Pontchartrain Beach recommends that this plan be implemented as written, taking into consideration the ever changing needs of the public and the environment.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this document is to provide a plan to improve Pontchartrain Beach guided by a combination of public needs and desires and professional expertise. Besides the general need for a more pleasant beach environment, a plan is necessary to accommodate the continual increase in activity by different users like swimmers and boaters, and to address dilapidated structures and overgrown landscaping.

The introduction includes an overview of Pontchartrain Beach and the planning approach. This document provides an overview of Pontchartrain Beach, summarizing the site location, history, current users, jurisdiction and environmental conditions of the beach. The planning approach can best be described as a public process guided by a committee of professional experts. This document provides a description of the formulation of the Committee to Improve Pontchartrain Beach and of the visioning/public participation strategy. The vision leads to the Action Plan and the Implementation Strategy, which addresses, goals, objectives, actions, governance, funding, scheduling and outreach activities of the plan.

Pontchartrain Beach Overview

Site Location

Pontchartrain Beach is a 15-acre site located on the south shore of Lake Pontchartrain in the city of New Orleans' Lakefront area, at the northern end of Elysian Fields Avenue. Pontchartrain Beach is a part of several neighborhoods including Lakeview, Lake Vista, Lake Terrace and Pontchartrain Park. An earthen hurricane protection levee and a floodwall separate the man-made beach from the developed property of the University of New Orleans Research and Technology Park. Figure 1 identifies the location of Pontchartrain Beach.

History

As there are no natural beaches occurring along the southern shore of Lake Pontchartrain, Pontchartrain Beach was originally a brackish marsh and swampland which provided habitat for fish, shellfish, muskrats, osprey, alligators and other native flora and fauna. In the 1830s, the swamp began to give way to human interests making Pontchartrain Beach a recreational area to enjoy for many years to come. During the early 1800s until the early 1900s, the current site of Pontchartrain Beach became known as Milneberg, a camp and resort-like destination connected by train along Elysian Fields Avenue to the Faubourg Marigny. Known as "Smokey Mary", the train brought residents and visitors alike to this waterfront haven until the 1930s.

Official Pontchartrain Beach construction began in the 1930s as a result of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's Works Progress Administration (WPA) and the Orleans

Figure 1. Pontchartrain Beach Site Map



Levee District (OLD) “Lakefront Improvement Project”. This improvement project included the creation of Pontchartrain Beach by shipping in sand from Horn Island, Mississippi. The WPA and OLD established a 21-acre beach with infrastructure for an amusement park. In 1939, OLD and the Batt Family signed a lease agreement to establish the Pontchartrain Beach Amusement Park. At its peak, the park had features such as the Zephyr roller coaster, an Olympic size swimming pool, a waterfront stage for live entertainment and a bathhouse.

Social and environmental factors led to the ultimate closure of Pontchartrain Beach in 1983. Poor water quality, gradual erosion, and hurricanes were the major contributors to the park’s decline. From 1983 until 2003, the site was officially closed to the public except during the Lake Pontchartrain Basin Foundation’s (LPBF) “Back to the Beach” annual event, providing outreach opportunities for the foundation and nostalgic experiences for visitors. In 1991, UNO bought a portion of the property and began construction of a research and technology park. With the requirement of allowing public access, UNO leased the 15-acre beach that remains today. Once major construction of the UNO research and technology park was completed, the beach was reopened to the public. Current uses of the beach include, but are not limited to swimming, motorized and non-motorized boating, recreational fishing, walking, dog walking, bicycling, picnicking and sunbathing.

Jurisdiction

Since the inception of OLD in 1890, this state agency has acted as owner of the property known as Pontchartrain Beach based on the district’s need to protect the city from flooding and to provide public access to what was once privately owned marshland. Relative to Pontchartrain Beach, OLD owns the levees, the entire lakefront open space and Lakeshore Drive, called Lakeshore Park, and also controls the floodgates. OLD maintains Pontchartrain Beach by cutting grass, emptying waste receptacles and picking up litter. The lake bottom is owned by the Louisiana Office of State Lands.

Since 1991, UNO has held the lease of the beach. Because this is state owned property, the lease requires that the public have access to the beach. Most recent improvements include UNO's fencing provision to allow for public use while protecting their interests in the research and technology park. UNO built a new parking area on the eastern side of the beach as well.

Environmental Conditions

Pontchartrain Beach environmental conditions are dependent upon two major issues: water quality and solid waste. Water quality is influenced by stormwater runoff, or rainwater combined with pollution, which drains into canals and is pumped to Lake Pontchartrain. Stormwater runoff results as rainfall mixes with items from city streets including litter, oil, grit and grime, and as sewerage malfunctions leak raw sewage into the stormwater drainage system.

For many years Lake Pontchartrain was underutilized for swimming and related recreational activities, which was mostly due to high fecal coliform bacteria counts, an indication of sewage. The Louisiana state water quality standard for swimming is below a Mean Probable Number of 200 bacteria colonies (fecal coliform) per 100 milliliters of water. In 2001, LPBF began sampling ten recreational sites around the basin for water quality parameters including fecal coliform, salinity, temperature, dissolved oxygen, conductivity and turbidity. Water quality analysts monitor these sites weekly and report results to the media. Analysis shows that with the exception of a few instances Pontchartrain Beach fecal coliform counts indicated good water quality for swimming. The exceptions occurred after high rainfall events. Based on these environmental quality measurements, the water at Pontchartrain Beach is not only safe for swimming most of the time but also offers some of the best water quality in the lake.

Litter conditions at Pontchartrain are mostly associated with stormwater runoff, but also with marine debris, or waste from boats. Items often found on the beach include plastic straws, bottle caps, bottles, aluminum cans, syringes, and solid waste typically associated with sewage. Ongoing efforts to improve these conditions include regular beach cleanups and stormwater education in schools. The Sewerage and Water Board of New Orleans and the City of New Orleans Mayor's Office of Environmental Affairs plan to place a boom (floating arm) in the London Avenue Canal to catch debris from stormwater runoff. This canal is the main conduit for litter landing on or near Pontchartrain Beach. Even with the above mentioned actions, more solutions are necessary to relieve problems related to litter and stormwater runoff. More collaborative efforts among government, private, non-profit and citizen groups are necessary to address pollution related to litter and sewage.

Planning approach

Committee to Improve Pontchartrain Beach

A core group of interested parties made up of the LPBF, the Mayor's Office of Environmental Affairs, the Young Leadership Council and the University of New Orleans, College of Urban and Public Affairs, began meeting in January 2004 to kick off

a campaign to clean up Pontchartrain Beach and to create a master plan for its future. Once discussions began, a smaller version of the annual “Beach Sweep” was planned and held on March 29, 2004. After a successful beach cleanup, the group reconvened deciding more could be done to improve the beach for public access and enjoyment. This led to the formation of the Committee to Improve Pontchartrain Beach (also referred to as the committee), made up of 14 municipal, parish, regional, institutional, academic, neighborhood and non-profit entities.

Through a series of meetings and email correspondence, the committee established a mission and a set of objectives. The Committee to Improve Pontchartrain Beach decided on the mission “To create a plan to improve Pontchartrain Beach that is based on the public’s vision and can be implemented and sustained.” The committee set the following objectives to accomplish their mission:

- To draw interest in this public planning process by implementing a public participation strategy;
- To provide recommendations to improve Pontchartrain Beach;
- To make suggestions and approve the final plan to improve Pontchartrain Beach; and
- To address next steps to implement the plan, potentially forming subcommittees and identifying sources of funding for capital improvements and ongoing maintenance.

Visioning process/public participation

The committee embarked on establishing a public participation strategy. The strategy was based on the idea that public participation is essential to creating a plan to improve Pontchartrain Beach because the public has needs and desires that outweigh the needs and desires of specific interests. A public participation strategy was created to ensure that all public communities would have the opportunity to be involved in the process, and that there would be continuous public support of a resultant plan.

The participation strategy involved tools to communicate opportunities for input, collect input and foster continuous support. The tools to communicate opportunities included press releases and announcements, newsletter coverage, flyers made available in public and private places like the “Back to the Beach” festival or coffee shops, and a database of interested and involved citizens. The tools to collect public input were two public meetings held in July 2004, which resulted in written and illustrated input, site surveys taken at Pontchartrain Beach during July, and email correspondence.

The committee created a survey to record visual assessments and interviews with people using the beach. The surveys were taken throughout July 2004 on both weekends and weekdays. In general, the surveys asked current beachgoers why they were there, how much time they spend there, how far they traveled to be there and most importantly, what they liked and disliked about Pontchartrain Beach. After interviews were taken, surveyors invited interviewed beachgoers to attend a two-part public meeting series on July 17 and 31, 2004.

Posters and flyers were produced advertising the public meetings in July to provide input on how to best improve Pontchartrain Beach. First, in June 2004, posters were hung at the annual Lake Pontchartrain Basin Foundation fundraising festival, “Back to the Beach”. Flyers were also distributed to festival attendees who visited the information booth or t-shirt sales area. Besides Pontchartrain Beach locations, posters and flyers were spread throughout the city of New Orleans and concentrated in the lakefront area. Places where the community gathers were targeted including coffee shops, restaurants, gyms and universities. Committee members were provided with copies of the flyers, which they could distribute as well. They were also provided with an example email to send to their contacts inviting them to participate.

The media was an important source of advertising for the planning process. Press releases were sent to television, radio station and newspaper contacts on three occasions to advertise the July 2004 public meetings. The first press release was sent to advertise a press conference at Pontchartrain Beach. The second and third press releases advertised the two public meetings.

The Times-Picayune covered the public planning process from beginning to end. A short interview was held on a morning radio station to promote the public meetings. Two television stations filmed and one aired activities and interviews from the location of the public meetings.

A database, including the names and contact information of participants from both public meetings was created. People who participated through email also became part of the database. The first public meeting participants were emailed to remind them about the next meeting.

Results of Public Participation Strategy

A total of 29 beachgoers were surveyed between July 3 and July 15, 2004. The majority of people surveyed visit the beach between once and three times per month, spend two to four hours and travel less than five miles to get there. People surveyed were involved in boating, crabbing, fishing, picnicking, playing in the sand, relaxing, water and beach sports, swimming and walking the dog. The types of improvements they would like to see are bathrooms, showers, benches, tables, boat restrictions in swimming area, more security, more sand, increased trash pick up and the removal of “No Swimming” signs. Limitations named by those surveyed included boats in swimming area and too much trash. Assets of the beach were thought to be the access to the beach by foot and boat, good water quality for swimming, location, dog-friendly environment, and the beach is not too crowded.

There were approximately 20 emailed comments on improving Pontchartrain Beach. Emails were sent by people who learned about the planning process, but could not attend the public meetings, and by people who attended the public meetings but wanted to add more input. Hence, written comments were received throughout July and August. The majority of issues addressed by emails related to keeping the beach natural, continuing to

allow dogs, continuing to share the beach with non-motorized boaters and possible reuse of the tennis courts, mostly as a skate park.

On July 17, 2004, 46 people from throughout New Orleans attended the first of a two-part public meeting process. Participants received a presentation on the history and current conditions of Pontchartrain Beach. Following this, a goal setting activity ensued where participants chose strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOTs) related to their perspectives on Pontchartrain Beach. The SWOTs were listed so that participants could vote for which SWOTs concerned or interested them the most. The votes were then tallied and ranked by importance. The importance of issues was then to be used in a charette activity where participants formed groups and illustrated their vision of Pontchartrain Beach. A committee member facilitated each group and referred to the goal setting exercise previously accomplished for guidance. The more an issue was addressed by the public the more attention it should receive in visual form.

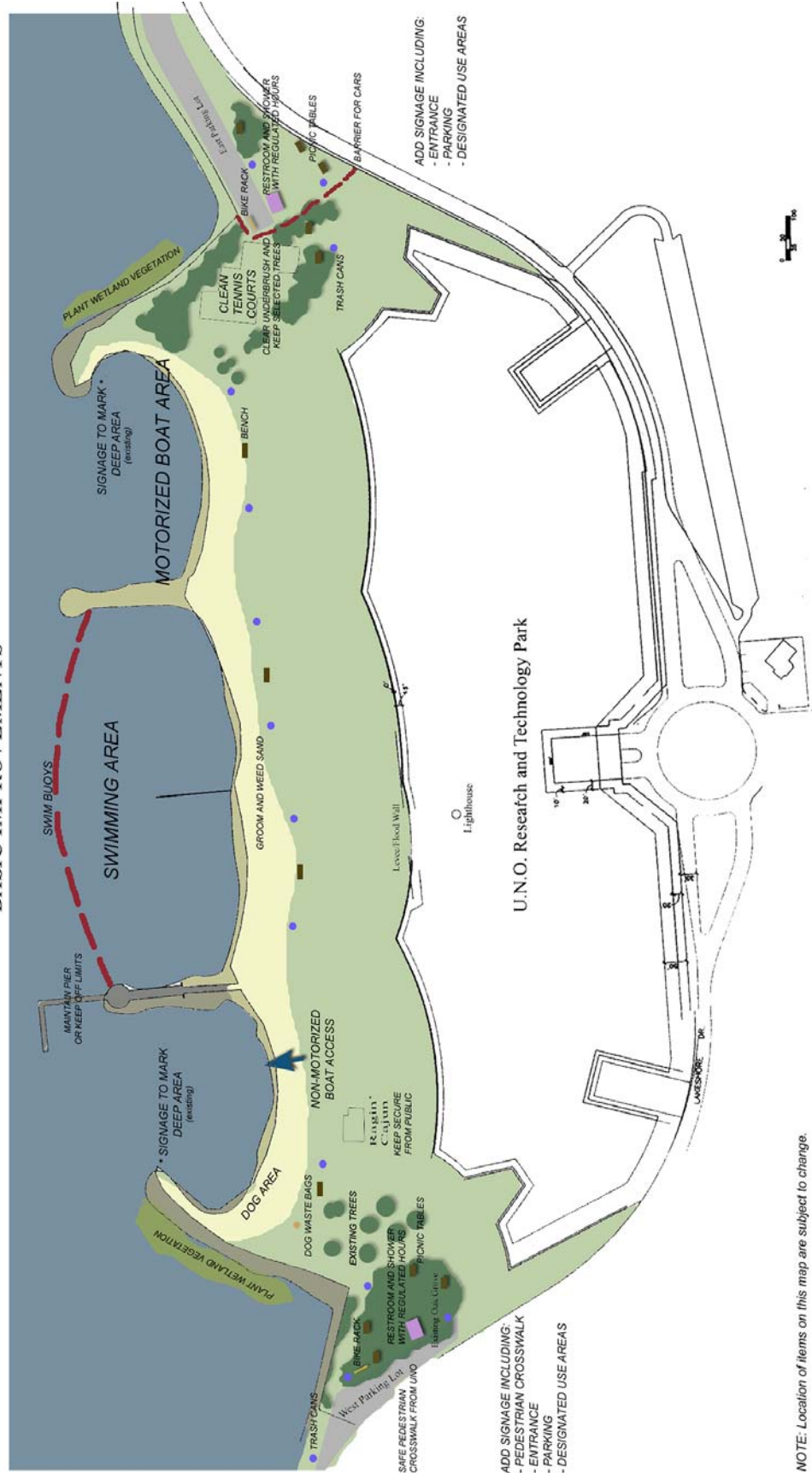
Eight groups presented their designs to the whole group. After the public meeting these illustrations, taking into consideration the SWOT results, were compiled into two conceptual designs by a landscape architect; a Basic Conceptual Design (See Figure 2) and an Expanded Conceptual Design. The improvements exhibited in each design were also described in written form. Table 1 provides a matrix of improvements. Please note that based on public comments and committee expertise not all of these improvements are included in the final plan.

At the second part of the meeting series, 61 participants, many returning from the first meeting, were presented with the basic and expanded conceptual designs. After seeing both designs, participants wrote comments on the basic design and voted for which expanded design elements interested them most. It was decided at the meeting that an element would be added: keep it natural/basic design. This element was overwhelmingly popular among the participants. Also added upon request was renovating the tennis courts into a skate park.

Ultimately, the results collected from the public are contained in summarized beachgoer surveys, written email comments, public meeting comments and discussion of the Conceptual Basic Design and the expanded improvements ranking. With each of these forms of public input, along with the experience of the Committee to Improve Pontchartrain Beach, a working vision was formulated: “We envision Pontchartrain Beach as a natural environment with basic amenities provided and maintained.”

PONTCHARTRAIN BEACH CONCEPTUAL DESIGN
BASIC IMPROVEMENTS

Figure 2. Basic Conceptual Design



NOTE: Location of items on this map are subject to change.

Table 1. Potential Improvements

IMPROVEMENT	BASIC	EXPANDED
Picnic tables and benches	X	X
More trash cans	X	X
Bathrooms/showers with regulated hours	X	X
Bathrooms attached to concessions (adds security)		X
Swim buoys/mark deep areas	X	X
Lifeguards		X
First aid station		X
Emergency call boxes		X
Pier security enhanced (better fence)	X	X
Improve existing pier		X
Remove/cap sheet piles		X
Improve rock jetties		X
Add fishing piers		X
Barriers for cars	X	X
Walkway		X
Bike racks		X
Bike path		X
Dog area (off leash, rest of beach on-leash)	X	X
Dog park		X
Dog waste bags in dog area	X	X
Signage (pedestrian entrance, designated use areas, parking)	X	X
Safe pedestrian crosswalk from UNO	X	X
Prominent entranceways		X
Move/redesign west entrance gate		X
Separate swimmers and boaters	X	X
Non-motorized boat access	X	X
Groom sand/weed removal	X	X
More sand/re-sculpt		X
More shade/trees		X
Add wetland vegetation	X	X
Clean tennis courts/remove underbrush and preserve selected trees		X
Remove tennis courts/refurbish		X
Play areas for children		X
Nature trail/environmental education area		X
Move lighthouse to beach		X
Mural on floodwall		X
Remove Rajin' Cajun' platform/adapt building		X
Please note that based on public comments and committee expertise not all of these improvements are included in the final plan.		

ACTION PLAN

The next step of this planning process was the transformation of the working vision into realistic aims. The committee discussed the vision and the forms of public input and decided upon five main improvement areas to be placed in an “Action Plan”: (1) Natural Physical Improvements; (2) Built Physical Improvements; (3) Access/ Transportation; (4) Security/Safety and (5) Funding and Governance. These improvement areas were addressed by subcommittees. Under the first four improvement areas, goals, objectives

and actions were established. Funding and governance became a part of the Implementation Strategy discussed in the next section of this document. It is important to note that the schedule for each objective will be affected by a Feasibility and Cost Analysis, which will be conducted January 2005 through June 2005. When complete, the Feasibility and Cost Analysis will be attached to this plan.

Natural Physical Improvements

Goal 1: Enhance the sand areas of the beach.

Objective 1.1: Rehabilitate and maintain the beach face. The beach face is the area from the water's edge to the where the sand forms a ridge or berm.

Action 1.1a: Remove unwanted vegetation from beach face during a beach sweep event.

Action 1.1b: Assess the need for additional sand.

Action 1.1c: If more sand is necessary, identify a source.

Action 1.1d: LPBF will purchase a beach sweeper machine which will be used by OLD for weekly small debris cleanup.

Action 1.1e: LPBF will continue to conduct beach sweep volunteer and educational activities.

Objective 1.2: Rehabilitate the berm.

Action 1.2a: Assess the proper shaping of the berm.

Action 1.2b: If there is a need to shape the berm sculpt it into a functional condition.

Action 1.2c: If there is a need to shape the berm vegetate berm with native plants.

Goal 2: Protect and enhance wildlife habitat

Objective 2.1: Preserve existing wildlife habitat.

Action 2.1a: Preserve and maintain oak grove located on western end of the beach.

Action 2.1b: Preserve and maintain remaining trees along the beach.

Objective 2.2: Create additional wildlife habitat.

Action 2.2a: The University of New Orleans Biology and Geology Departments will select appropriate locations for and plant wetland vegetation including marsh grasses and submerged aquatic vegetation.

Goal 3: Manage water quality at Pontchartrain Beach

Objective 3.1: Monitor water quality.

Action 3.1a: LPBF continues weekly primary contact recreation sampling and reporting results to the media.

- Action 3.1b:* Post and maintain sign that provides weekly water quality.
- Action 3.1c:* The University of New Orleans will restore and continue operation of the real-time monitoring device known as the “hydrolab”.
- Action 3.1d:* Add Pontchartrain Beach as a location for the Tulane, UNO and LPBF predictive modeling project.
- Objective 3.2:** Improve water quality.
- Action 3.2a:* The City of New Orleans and Sewerage and Water Board of New Orleans will implement a solid waste retention boom project on London Avenue Canal.
- Action 3.2b:* The City of New Orleans and Sewerage and Water Board of New Orleans will implement a complementary litter education project.
- Action 3.2c:* LPBF will purchase a beach sweeper machine which will be used by OLD for weekly small debris cleanup.
- Action 3.2d:* LPBF will continue to conduct beach sweep volunteer and educational activities.

Physical Built Improvements

Goal 4: Enhance and control beach access.

- Objective 4.1:** Provide built improvements to enhance beach access.
- Action 4.1a:* Maintain the grass to encourage pedestrian movement.
- Action 4.1b:* Assess wording, placement and type of signage needed to identify beach access points.
- Action 4.1c:* Identify methods to improve functionality of western pedestrian gate.
- Objective 4.2:** Provide built improvements to control vehicular beach access.
- Action 4.2a:* OLD will establish a permanent system to bar vehicles from driving onto the beach.¹
- Action 4.2b:* Work with OLD to identify how to prohibit regular vehicle passage onto the beach, while allowing for emergency vehicle passage.

¹ Since the conceptual design was completed, OLD has placed barriers at the beach from the eastern parking lot. It is unsure if this is a temporary or permanent measure.

Goal 5: Address solid waste.

- Objective 5.1: Reduce litter on the beach.
- Action 5.1a:* Assess number, condition and functionality of receptacles to both users and maintenance staff. The beach may need receptacles with lids.
 - Action 5.1b:* If necessary, purchase more and/or different receptacles.
- Objective 5.2: Reduce pet waste.
- Action 5.2a:* Assess methods of collection and disposal of pet waste.
 - Action 5.2b:* Decide the placement and number of pet waste receptacles that will be necessary. Consider placing special receptacle(s) in shady location(s), and away from picnic tables and benches.

Goal 6: Provide basic amenities

- Objective 6.1: Provide bathrooms and hand washing basins at each entrance.
- Action 6.1a:* Research sewerage and water connection process for entrance locations.
 - Action 6.1b:* Research local restroom alternatives (i.e. Port-o-let trailers) as well as maintenance and public safety management procedures, including those used at Fort Pike, City Park, festivals, etc.
 - Action 6.1c:* Construct appropriate number and type of restroom facilities.
- Objective 6.2: Provide outdoor showers at each entrance.
- Action 6.2a:* Research water connection and drainage process for entrance locations.
 - Action 6.1b:* Construct appropriate number and type of outdoor shower facilities.
- Objective 6.3: Provide seating.
- Action 6.3a:* Assess bench locations with best views and access.
 - Action 6.3b:* Decide on the type and size of benches needed.
 - Action 6.3c:* Purchase and place benches.
 - Action 6.3d:* Maintain benches and replace after irreparable damage.
- Objective 6.4: Provide a picnic area in the oak grove.
- Action 6.4a:* Assess the number, size and type of picnic tables necessary.
 - Action 6.4b:* In conjunction with Action 6.4a, consider the number and type of waste receptacles

needed based on the number of picnic tables provided.

Action 6.4c: Purchase and place picnic tables.

Action 6.4d: Maintain picnic tables and replace after irreparable damages.

Objective 6.5: Accommodate bicyclists.

Action 6.5a: Decide on the number and location of bicycle racks.

Action 6.5b: Purchase and place bicycle racks.

Goal 7: Improve tennis court area.

Objective 7.1: Address vegetation overgrowth in tennis court area.

Action 7.1a: Conduct a vegetative assessment to determine plant materials to retain or remove.

Action 7.1b: Assess time and materials necessary to retain and remove vegetation.

Action 7.1c: Decide if volunteer or professional efforts are appropriate.

Action 7.1d: Remove overgrowth with volunteer and/or professional assistance.

Objective 7.2: Consider adapting tennis court area for alternative recreational uses, including but not limited to refurbishing as tennis courts, UNO sailing club facility, playground area, environmental education center or skate park.² Actions will be identified once a use has been established.

Goal 8: Enhance dog-friendly environment

Objective 8.1: Designate an area for dogs that includes “off leash” privileges and lake access.

Action 8.1a: Create signage designating dog area (“Canine Cove”) either on far western or eastern coves.

Action 8.1b: Meet with the Louisiana SPCA to discuss partnership possibilities.

Objective 8.2: Provide receptacles specially designed for pet waste.

Action 8.2a: Discuss procedures for collection and disposal of pet waste with maintenance staff.

Action 8.2b: Decide on location, number and type of special receptacles. Receptacles should be placed in shade and away from picnic table and bench locations.

² Friends of New Orleans Recreational Department (NORD) and RideNOLA are discussing skate park locations in all park planning efforts being conducted throughout the city, including NORD playgrounds and City Park.

Action 8.2c: Purchase and place receptacles.

Goal 9: Encourage the separation of motorized boats and swimmers.

Objective 9.1: Designate motorized boat anchorage in either the eastern or western cove to be determined by location of other uses (i.e. reuse of tennis court area for sailing club building, which will require access to the eastern cove).

Action 9.1a: Decide the location and wording for signage to identify a motorized boat anchorage location.

Action 9.1b: Purchase, place and maintain signs.

Objective 9.2: Designate swimming area in central cove.

Action 9.2a: Research best method(s) to identify swimming areas.

Action 9.2b: Implement and maintain appropriate buoy system or other method(s) to separate motorized boats from swimmers.

Goal 10: Improve structures extending from the beach into Lake Pontchartrain.

Objective 10.1: Address condition of existing pier.

Action 10.1a: Research pier demolition.

Action 10.1b: Research restoration alternatives.

Action 10.1c: Demolish or restore pier.

Objective 10.2: Address sheet pile.

Action 10.2a: Investigate sheet pile removal.

Action 10.2b: Investigate sheet pile capping with soil and grass.

Action 10.2c: Remove or cap sheet pile.

Objective 10.3: Address rock jetties.

Action 10.3a: Investigate capping with soil and grass of central rock jetty for division of uses and pedestrian access.

Action 10.3b: Cap or secure loose rocks on jetties.

Goal 11: Address the Ragin' Cajun building.

Objective 11.1: Remove or adapt the Ragin' Cajun building.

Action 11.1a: Seek professional analysis of structural integrity of building.

Action 11.1b: If structural integrity is good, consider adaptive uses that coordinate with other goals.

Action 11.1c: If structural integrity is poor, research demolition process, demolish building, and groom site following removal of all demolition materials.

Access/Transportation

Goal 12: Improve user access.

Objective 12.1: Continue open hours of dawn until dusk.

Action 12.1a: Ensure that existing signs provide correct beach hours.

Action 12.1b: If signage does not exist, provide and maintain signs with hours.

Objective 12.2: Establish Pontchartrain Beach bus stop.

Action 12.2a: Assess possible locations.

Action 12.2b: Identify existing bus stops (could rename stop for Pontchartrain Beach).

Objective 12.3: Enhance western parking area.

Action 12.3a: Repave parking area.

Action 12.3b: Re-stripe parking area.

Objective 12.4: Create safe access from UNO to the beach.

Action 12.4a: Locate a safe access point from UNO campus across Lakeshore Drive.

Objective 12.5: Establish a connection to existing bicycle paths.

Action 12.5a: Identify locations on bicycle paths to indicate connections to the beach.

Goal 13: Improve emergency vehicle access.

Objective 13.1: Create emergency vehicle access.

Action 13.1a: Coordinate with OLD to address access issues through gates at western parking area or through movable barriers at eastern parking area.

Security/Safety

Goal 14: Improve the beach for swimming safety.

Objective 14.1: Designate a cove for swimming only.

Action 14.1a: Place appropriate separation or buoy system in central cove.

Action 14.1b: Create, post and maintain “Swim at Your Own Risk” or “No Life Guard On Duty” signs near each cove.

Objective 14.2: Teach water safety.

Action 14.2a: American Red Cross, LPBF and Ashley Marie Kelly Foundation will continue to conduct swimming lessons.

Action 14.2b: Replicate a Jefferson Parish model project where the American Red Cross would do basic water safety training with OLD and NOPD.

- Objective 14.3: Identify water hazards.
- Action 14.3a:* Create, post and maintain depth markers.
 - Action 14.3b:* Identify cause, effect and solution to lake bottom holes at the end of the rock jetties.
 - Action 14.3c:* Remove or cap sheet pile in central cove.
 - Action 14.3d:* Post and maintain sign that provides weekly water quality.

Goal 15: Secure and maintain improvements.

- Objective 15.1: Secure and maintain bathroom and outdoor shower facilities.
- Action 15.1a:* Regularly clean bathroom facilities.
 - Action 15.1b:* Bathroom facilities will have regulated hours that mimic beach hours and will be locked in the evening.
 - Action 15.1c:* Plan for ongoing repairs and replacement of damaged bathroom facility components.
- Objective 15.2: Secure and maintain remaining structures extending from the beach into Lake Pontchartrain.
- Action 15.2a:* Investigate structural integrity of each of the piers, jetties, etc.
 - Action 15.2b:* On a regular basis, investigate structural safety, and repair when necessary.
- Objective 15.3: Secure Rajin' Cajun building.
- Action 15.3a:* If determined unsound, before demolition, post "Condemned" signs.
 - Action 15.3b:* After demolition, remove all debris and blend into the natural looking berm.
- Objective 15.4: Secure bike racks.
- Action 15.4a:* Place bike racks in open area in clear view of visitors.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

Governance

Currently, Pontchartrain Beach property is owned by OLD, which is a Louisiana state entity. UNO leases this property and OLD maintains it. Under the lease, UNO is responsible for allowing access and maintenance. However, OLD currently maintains the beach by cutting grass, collecting waste and regulating the gates.

All plans need a mechanism for implementation and oversight of establishing and maintaining planned improvements. In order to implement plan goals the matter of governance must be addressed. A decision on governance for Pontchartrain Beach requires consideration of who will hold the lease from OLD, and who will be responsible

for existing elements and coordinating planned improvements regarding maintenance, security, safety and access. Four alternatives are presented for consideration.

Alternatives

Alternative One: UNO keeps the lease

With no change, UNO keeps the lease. The Committee to Improve Pontchartrain Beach implements plan improvements. Although OLD currently maintains the beach, UNO will continue to be responsible for all costs associated with ongoing maintenance of existing and future elements.

Alternative Two: Lease reverts to OLD

OLD takes back the lease from UNO. The committee will partner with OLD and steward the plan. OLD will be responsible for and continue to maintain the property and improvements. Under this alternative, a covenant agreement based on this plan will be established between OLD and UNO and will detail what can and cannot be done to the site. This ensures that the privacy and security rights of UNO's research and technology park investments will be protected.

Alternative Three: Form a Pontchartrain Beach non-profit organization

A non-profit organization is formed. This organization assumes the lease and implements the plan. A broad based board will be created to steward plan implementation including maintenance and improvements. This board will include membership organizations involved in the Committee to Improve Pontchartrain Beach. Under this alternative, a covenant agreement based on this plan will be established among OLD, the non-profit and UNO and will detail what can and cannot be done to the site. This ensures that the privacy and security rights of UNO's research and technology park investments will be protected.

Alternative Four: Designate as a State Park

Pontchartrain Beach will be designated by the state as a state park. Daily operations will be run by a state employee. Committee to Improve Pontchartrain Beach members will serve as an advisory board and/or fundraising board. Under this alternative, a covenant agreement based on this plan will be established among OLD, State Parks and UNO and will detail what can and cannot be done to the site. This ensures that the privacy and security rights of UNO's research and technology park investments will be protected.

Alternatives Analysis

An analysis of the alternatives provides the strengths and weaknesses of each option. Alternative One provides the strength of the organizational abilities of the UNO Foundation. The UNO Foundation will be able to manage and coordinate the funding of planned improvements through its non-profit status. Weaknesses include: (1) Since UNO has held the lease, not much action has been seen; (2) the primary focus of UNO's lease holding activities is to protect their research and technology park investment; and (3) the mission of UNO is unrelated to public access.

Alternative Two strengths involve the relief of UNO's responsibility and financial burden to provide recreational space, to accept liability claims, and to maintain existing elements and planned improvements at Pontchartrain Beach. Another Alternative Two strength is that OLD already maintains and is responsible for adjacent lakefront areas. This alternative indicates no weaknesses.

The strength of Alternative Three is that a non-profit entity specific to improving and maintaining the beach will be able to manage and coordinate the funding of planned improvements. This alternative is thought to be a long term solution. Hence, this alternative's weakness is the time it would take to establish a 501(c)3 agency, which would extend the time it would take to implement planned improvements.

Alternative Four strength is the long standing management principles of the state park system. The weakness is that state parks are currently uninterested in Pontchartrain Beach due to its small size.

Recommended Alternative

The recommendation for governance of Pontchartrain Beach is a combination of Alternatives Two and Three or Two and Four. The lease should revert back to OLD, whose mission is to protect the city from flooding and to provide recreational space. In the short term, collaborating with OLD, active committee members will lead Action Plan implementation. Active members include: (1) Lake Pontchartrain Basin Foundation (2) New Orleans Mayor's Office of Environmental Affairs, (3) Young Leadership Council, (4) University of New Orleans, (5) American Red Cross, (6) Ashley Marie Kelly Foundation, (7) UNO Biology Department, (8) Regional Planning Commission, and (9) Sewerage and Water Board of New Orleans. In the long term a non-profit may be established to take the place of the committee. Another possible option is for the site to be adopted by Louisiana State Parks. Further discussion with Louisiana State Parks need to be conducted to encourage their interest.

Funding

Implementation of each goal and related objectives and actions requires an understanding of how to locate financial support, how much each improvement will cost and who will manage and coordinate the funding. Potential funding sources include corporate and individual donations, federal, state and local government grants, philanthropic foundations, fundraising events and committee related resources. Individual committee member groups may apply for and receive funds for Action Plan improvements and will coordinate efforts with the governing body. Based on the governance recommendation (a combination of Alternative Two and Three), in the short term, funding will be coordinated by active committee members and OLD. In the long term funding will be managed by a non-profit organization or Louisiana State Parks.

To identify the cost of implementing each planned improvement as stated under the Action Plan, a Feasibility and Cost Analysis will be conducted January 2005 to June 2005. The analysis will impact the prioritization of goals, objectives and action items.

What can be funded in the short term and what will need to be funded in the long term will dictate the schedule of implementation.

Schedule

As stated previously, the schedule for Action Plan improvements will be determined by the Feasibility and Cost Analysis. Once this analysis is complete, the Action Plan will include a schedule. The analysis will be completed by the summer of 2005. In the meantime, when opportunities arise for particular action items they will be implemented.

Outreach

Continual outreach on Pontchartrain Beach improvements, water quality and access is extremely important to the success of the plan. The following is a list of actions that will be conducted by the Committee to Improve Pontchartrain Beach to implement outreach efforts.

- Conduct a press conference to release the plan to the public and provide specifics about the plan.
- Periodically send press releases related to actions implemented to let the public know what improvements are occurring.
- Coordinate beach events to welcome people and get people out to the beach. Possibilities include beach sweeps, picnics, canoe/kayak trips, student field trips and swimming safety clinics.
- Continue providing water quality data to the public.
- Continue and expand litter education programs.
- Create a water safety tips brochure.
- Post signage describing beach safety and access.
- Address tourism aspects of Pontchartrain Beach, which may include working with the New Orleans Board of Tourism.