



LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY **COMMUNICATIONS**

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LDEQ Certifies Louisiana's First Pollutant Reduction Credits through Water Quality Trading Program

BATON ROUGE, LA — The Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality (LDEQ) has certified the state's first pollutant reduction credits under its Water Quality Trading (WQT) program — a major milestone in Louisiana's efforts to use market-based tools to improve water quality and support environmental restoration.

The certified credits were generated through a coastal bald cypress reforestation project completed by Restore the Earth Foundation (REF). The project is located at the Salvador Wildlife Management Area, on the north shore of Lake Catouatche just south of New Orleans. REF submitted the project to the WQT program as a model for how nature-based solutions — like large-scale reforestation — can measurably reduce sediment, nitrogen and phosphorus runoff while also promoting soil accretion and enhancing ecosystem resilience. REF submitted the project in partnership with EcoMetrics LLC.



“This is an exciting and important step forward for Louisiana,” **LDEQ Secretary Courtney J. Burdette said.** “The Water Quality Trading program is designed to empower innovation, leverage public-private partnerships and create sustainable pathways to cleaner water. The certification of these first credits for the state exemplifies that environmental stewardship and economic opportunity can go hand in hand.”

The WQT program, developed by LDEQ in accordance with the Louisiana Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (LPDES), enables regulated point-source dischargers to meet water quality-based effluent limitations through the purchase of pollutant reduction credits generated by approved nonpoint source projects. These projects can include reforestation, streambank stabilization, constructed wetlands and other conservation efforts that yield measurable water quality improvements.

“We’re thrilled to see the hard work of REF and EcoMetrics result in the first officially certified water quality credits in the state,” **LDEQ Environmental Scientist Manager and WQT program lead Rachael Mathews said.** “This success sets a strong precedent for future projects — especially those using natural infrastructure — to be part of Louisiana’s broader solution to reducing nonpoint source pollution in our watersheds.”

By enabling the purchase of verified pollutant reductions, the WQT program provides flexibility for regulated entities while driving investment into environmental restoration in the areas that need it most. The Salvador Wildlife Management Area reforestation project serves as an ideal model, demonstrating how habitat restoration efforts can yield direct benefits to water quality and climate resilience.

LDEQ continues to work with stakeholders, regulated entities and environmental organizations to support the development of new projects within the program. To learn more about how to generate or purchase credits, visit the LDEQ WQT program page at www.deq.louisiana.gov/page/water-quality-trading.

Photo Key: Appearing at the Salvador Wildlife Management Area on April 9, 2025, are (L – R): *Claude Griffin*, Executive Director, U.S. Business Council for Sustainable Development; *Ed Pinero*, President, EcoMetrics; *Rachael Mathews*, Environmental Scientist Manager, LDEQ; *Taylor Marshall*, Executive Director, Restore the Earth Foundation; and *Michael Palamone*, Chief Administrative Officer, St. Charles Parish.

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About the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality

LDEQ is dedicated to serving the people of Louisiana by providing comprehensive environmental protection to promote and protect health, safety, and welfare.
