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## **CRCL Celebrates Coastal Champions with Virtual Awards Event**

*Recipients include Lt. Gen. Russel Honoré, student Mervin Smith, journalist Bob Marshall*

**NEW ORLEANS** (April 8, 2021) — The Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana (CRCL) is proud to honor seven individuals or groups as part of its virtual 2020 Coastal Stewardship Awards. A digital ceremony, which features videos packaged in a book-like form, can be found [here](#). CRCL, the first statewide nonprofit dedicated to coastal restoration in Louisiana, had intended to celebrate the award winners as part of a larger program at an in-person event in March of 2020, but that event could not be held because of the coronavirus pandemic.

Special awards pertaining to the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversaries of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita and 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Deepwater Horizon oil spill were among those given as part of the digital ceremony, as was a Lifetime Achievement Award. Recipients of the awards also were given trophies.

“These individuals provide hope and leadership as we work to secure a future on Louisiana’s coast,” said CRCL Board Chairman Garvin Pittman in a speech introducing the award winners. “For the past 25 years, CRCL has celebrated our coastal stewards by highlighting a handful of champions who have dedicated their lives to saving our coast, and we have celebrated some who are just beginning their quests. Unfortunately, we had to postpone our 25th annual celebration last year because of the pandemic, but we felt it was important to acknowledge leadership, stewardship and achievements.”

The award winners are Bob Marshall, Lifetime Achievement Award; Mervin Smith, Youth Coastal Stewardship Award; the Terrebonne Readiness Assistance Coalition, Hurricane Rita Award; retired Lt. Gen. Russel Honoré, Hurricane Katrina Award; Karolien Debusschere, Deepwater Horizon Award; Casey McMann, Volunteer of the Year Award; and the Sirens of New Orleans, Friend of CRCL Award.

- Bob Marshall is a New Orleans journalist who has brought international attention to coastal land loss in Louisiana. He has written for publications including The States-Item, The Times-Picayune, The Advocate and The Lens, and he has collaborated with National Public Radio, the Center for Investigative Reporting and ProPublica. He was part of teams at The Times-Picayune that won Pulitzer Prizes for a series on declining fisheries around the world and for reporting on Hurricane Katrina and its aftermath. Marshall was elected to the Outdoors Writers Association of America’s Circle of Chiefs, its highest award for conservation writing, and he was an inaugural inductee into the Loyola University School of Communications Hall of Fame. In his spare time, Marshall gives tours for Louisiana Lost Lands Environmental Tours, whose mission is to educate people on the importance of Louisiana’s wetlands.
- Mervin Smith is a student at New Harmony High School who is a regular volunteer at CRCL’s restoration events, planting native trees to combat subsidence and rising sea levels. Throughout 2019, Marvin recruited his high school peers for volunteer events throughout Louisiana, and that year he also

participated in the Gulf Equity Water Corps to help raise awareness of sea level rise. He presented findings about coastal restoration at his school and at the HBCU Climate Change Conference.

- The Terrebonne Readiness Assistance Coalition, represented by the Rev. Joe Arnold, is the longest continuously operating community-based disaster recovery/preparedness nonprofit in the nation. Since just after Hurricane Andrew, TRAC has been helping families in Terrebonne and Lafourche parishes and in Grand Isle, providing assistance in rebuilding following crises or disasters; helping people navigate the recovery process and implement recovery plans; strengthening planning efforts and enhancing preparation for future disasters; and empowering people to engage in community activities.
- Lt. Gen. Russel Honoré supported Department of Defense planning and response for Hurricanes Floyd, Lilli, Isidore, Isabel, Charley, Frances, Ivan and Jeanne. In 2005, he commanded Joint Task Force-Katrina, leading the Department of Defense response to Hurricanes Katrina and Rita in Alabama, Mississippi and Louisiana. He was widely recognized for his leadership in New Orleans in the Katrina aftermath. Honoré has won numerous military decorations and awards and has received a number of honorary doctorates from colleges and universities. He now leads GreenARMY, an alliance of civic, community and environmental groups pushing for social, political and environmental change in Louisiana. More recently, he was put in charge of reviewing security at the U.S. Capitol in the aftermath of the Jan. 6 riot.
- Karolien Debusschere is the deputy oil spill coordinator at the Louisiana Oil Spill Coordinator's Office. She manages a small staff that works to connect all programs related to oil spills in the state. She connects work by state and federal agencies, including the Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority, the state Department of Wildlife & Fisheries, the Department of Environmental Quality, the Department of Natural Resources, the Coast Guard and the Environmental Protection Authority, with representatives of the oil and gas industry and the public. Her leadership was crucial during the Deepwater Horizon disaster. She is a former Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana board member.
- Casey McMann, with his 2019-20 class of high school students, assisted in several CRCL volunteer restoration events throughout Louisiana's coast. Casey won several awards for his efforts in the classroom as a biology and physics teacher at Belle Chasse High School and continues to show the passion and leadership necessary to guide Louisiana's future coastal stewards.
- The Sirens of New Orleans are a philanthropy-minded dance and marching Carnival krewe that made coastal restoration efforts one of its main beneficiaries in 2019.

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#### **About the Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana:**

*[The Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana](#) is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to drive bold, science-based action to rebuild coastal Louisiana through outreach, restoration and advocacy. Incorporated in 1988, CRCL represents a unique mix of businesses, local governments, industries, scientific communities, national and local conservation groups, hunters, anglers and a broad spectrum of concerned citizens who all share a common vision and commitment to the sustainability of coastal Louisiana. The common vision of these varied and diverse interests is the driving strength of CRCL, the most effective and recognized coastal advocacy organization in the state. Recognizing that Louisiana's coastal land loss will have dramatic impacts on the nation's energy, navigation and fisheries interests, CRCL works at the state, local and federal level to ensure that restoring and protecting coastal Louisiana is a top priority for our state and the nation.*