

People First: Building Sustainable Communities

Vision Statement

State Policy

Louisiana's environment, educational system, natural resources, and cultural diversity are priorities of the state. Educational levels have been enhanced, and, all members of Louisiana communities, from individual citizens to corporations, have a strong sense of stewardship for the environment. The image of environmentalism has been revamped to include an allegiance to jobs and strong communities. This has spurred the creation of well organized coalitions between workers, small business people, fishers, CEOs, teachers, and police jurors.

Louisiana citizens and politicians have abandoned the old debate that pitted jobs versus the environment and now focus on insuring a continually improving quality of life for all of the state's residents. Voting records of the legislators reflect their knowledge of environmental issues and the importance of these issues both to the economy and the well-being of the state's citizens. Campaign finance reform has been enacted in Louisiana; all corporate campaign contributions are publicized.

All citizens have equal access to and attention of government decision makers and staff. Each parish in the state has an advisory commission that maintains grassroots involvement with environmental issues. Louisiana citizens are easily able to access information about corporate activity.

These developments have brought great change to Louisiana-particularly in the area of growth. Louisiana is now seen as one of the most desirable and progressive states in which to live. We are experiencing an increasing demand for goods and services. In order to keep improving our quality of life, the state has taken bold steps:

_Louisiana's public agencies have the staffs, resources, and political will to enforce environmental laws and regulations strictly and uniformly.

_Industrial tax subsidies and cost/benefit analyses take into account all external costs. Accountability is the new watchword; companies that provide local jobs and maintain good environmental records receive subsidies that are denied their counterparts with poor track records in these areas.

_The Louisiana Supreme Court's IT Decision plays a major role in permitting decisions for the DEQ, W&F, DNR, and other public agencies. The state has formulated siting regulations.

_State government has adopted procurement policies that mandate the use of recycled materials.

_A comprehensive land use plan has been completed for every parish within the state. All industrial, commercial, and residential development is planned so as to maximize long-term economic benefits and correct long-standing environmental injustices endured by low-income communities and communities of color.

_Louisiana has strong policies and regulations related to pollution prevention-policies that are supported by all Louisiana citizens, corporate and individual. The state uses strong economic incentives to encourage pollution prevention in all categories. These incentives attract industries that have no adverse impact on the environment.

Economic Vision for Louisiana

Louisiana's economy is prosperous, dynamic, innovative, and resilient. Poverty is at or below the national average, Louisiana's workforce is as well-educated as any in the nation, and all workers have access to continuing-educational programs. Industrial diversity is high and no community is overly dependent on a single industry or employer. Entrepreneurial activity is high, in response to educational programs, a tax system, and basic infrastructure that encourage development of new businesses by Louisianians and expansion of existing firms. Louisiana is noted for finding efficient, fair, and innovative solutions to public problems. The state has eliminated subsidies-including tax-concession programs-that encourage wasteful use of the state's natural resources, impose an economic burden on taxpayers, and stifle prosperity in all but a few industries. Economic-development programs explicitly recognize that a healthy environment is good for the economy and are built around the goal of conserving the state's natural resources. Louisiana is first among the states in eliminating pollution, land uses, and water uses that waste resources, create unreasonable health risks, and foul the state's quality of life. Louisiana has adopted and implemented explicit policies to ensure that the natural resources each generation passes to the next are as extensive and in as good condition as those it inherited from previous generations.

Energy Vision and Policy

In order to protect its environment and increase the quality of life for its citizens, Louisiana has become a national and international leader in the responsible exploration, development, and use of energy. In order to achieve this goal, Louisiana leaders and citizens have dedicated themselves to four basic principles:

1. Efficiency as a resource. Technology that saves a unit of energy while maintaining productive capability is equal in value to technology that produces a unit of energy.

2. Waste minimization. Every cost-effective unit of useful work must be extracted from every unit of energy consumed.

3. Damage mitigation. All environmental and other damages to the "commons" caused by the exploration, production, and use of energy must be completely mitigated.

4. Energy economics. All economic analyses of cost-effectiveness, whether for exploration, development, or use of energy includes: (a) start-up, operating, and clean-up costs (i.e. life cycle analyses), and (b) internalization of environmental and other damages that have previously been socialized.

As the nation seeks to clean up its air and reduce carbon dioxide emissions, natural gas has increased in value in large part because it produces half the carbon dioxide and a fraction of the pollutants per energy unit compared to coal. Louisiana's natural gas reserves (20% of the U.S. total domestic reserves) have thus taken on national importance. Louisiana is maximizing this opportunity and is using its natural gas resources to create jobs and economic development for the state.

As natural gas prices rise with demand, industries in Louisiana that rely on natural gas have installed low-cost energy efficiency technologies that their competitors in other states have been using for years. Some Louisiana industries have developed profitable spin-off businesses exporting the efficiency products and techniques overseas.

Renewable energy companies, heartened by Louisiana's new commitment to progressive energy policies, have begun investing in Louisiana's abandoned industrial parks—areas that the state had at one time unsuccessfully attempted to fill with smokestack industries. The famous Louisiana sunshine itself has become a resource when used in arrays of photovoltaic panels or captured in the biomass from corn, sugar cane, and rice crops.

Louisiana's major cities have made mass transit (including light rail systems) an integral part of their long-term development plans. With help from Louisiana's congressional delegation, research and development on natural gas as a primary feedstock for automotive fuel cell technologies has received major support. A public/private partnership, which includes Louisiana's state government, is developing the infrastructure for a natural gas transportation system.