



News Release

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Louisiana Coastal Area Ecosystem Restoration Study Nears Completion

Vicksburg, MISS., October 12, 2004 – The Louisiana Coastal Area Ecosystem Restoration Study, designed to map out a strategy for restoring Louisiana’s nationally significant coastal wetlands, is nearing completion. Comments received during a series of public meetings have been addressed and by the end of this month, the document should be in Washington, D.C. for final policy review.

“The efforts of all parties involved in bringing this study to fruition are commendable,” said Brig. Gen. Robert Crear, Commander, Mississippi Valley Division and President-designee of the Mississippi River Commission. “With the coast of Louisiana losing the equivalent of a football field every thirty-five minutes, this national treasure must be restored, protected and preserved.”

The study area, which includes the Louisiana coastal area from Mississippi to Texas, is influenced by the Mississippi River. The river’s resources are available to contribute to the restoration of the coastal ecosystem. The federal government and state of Louisiana have been conducting ecosystem restoration efforts for the past 14 years under the Breaux Act. In addition, the scientific community in Louisiana is recognized internationally for their expertise in climate and wetland research.

“This study represents the culmination of a lot of effort on the part of engineers, scientists, and many others from academia, the state and other federal agencies,” said Kevin Wagner, LCA Senior Project Manager in the New Orleans District. “It will serve as the blueprint for coastal restoration work during the next 10 years.”

Upcoming dates of importance include a 30-day state and agency review period, from November 5 to December 6, before the Chief of Engineers prepares his report and sends it to the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works on December 30 for consideration.

The lessons learned and extensive experience gained from past restoration and research efforts have been applied in the LCA Study and can continue to be applied in a systematic way to develop and implement a coast wide plan for addressing the land loss problem and critical needs facing the coastal area.

Opportunities for ecosystem restoration include:

- Freshwater re-introductions by diverting water from the Mississippi river into hydrologic basins;
- Barrier island restoration through placement of sand from offshore sources or the Mississippi River to sustain geomorphic structures. This would provide additional protection from hurricane storm surges and protect the ecology of estuarine bays and marshes by reducing gulf influences, as well as protect nationally important water bird nesting areas;
- Hydrologic modification, such as degrading excavated dredged material banks, to help restore salinity and marsh inundation patterns and provide fishery access in previously unavailable habitats; and
- The use of sediment material from dedicated or maintenance dredging (e.g. beneficial use) to create a marsh platform, which could create large amounts of coastal habitat quickly.
- The recommended plan has seven major components, including five critical restoration projects, a science and technology program, and a series of demonstration projects described as follows:

Near-Term Critical Restoration Features. The recommended plan includes a number of critical restoration projects, five of which are recommended for near-term continued study, design, and implementation. These five projects address the most critical ecological needs of the coastal area and address a range of effects essential for success in restoring the coast. The five near-term critical restoration features are:

- Mississippi River Gulf Outlet Environmental Restoration Features
- Small Diversion at Hope Canal
- Barataria Basin Barrier Shoreline Restoration, Caminada Headland, Shell Island
- Small Bayou Lafourche Reintroduction
- Medium Diversion at Myrtle Grove with Dedicated Dredging

Science & Technology Program. The recommended plan includes a Science and Technology Program over the initial 10 years of the LCA program. The major goal of the program would be to decrease scientific and engineering uncertainties of restoration efforts and to optimize restoration opportunities.

Demonstration Projects. The recommend plan includes funding over a 10-year period for demonstration projects to be developed by the Science and Technology Program. These projects will cost a maximum of \$25 million each.

“The legacy we leave to the people of our nation’s valuable coast will be greatly influenced by what we do to restore this vital environmental and economic national asset,” Crear added. “This area serves as an economic engine and extremely valuable habitat for our nation.”

More information on the LCA Study can be found at <http://www.lca.gov>.