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# Louisiana Wetlands News

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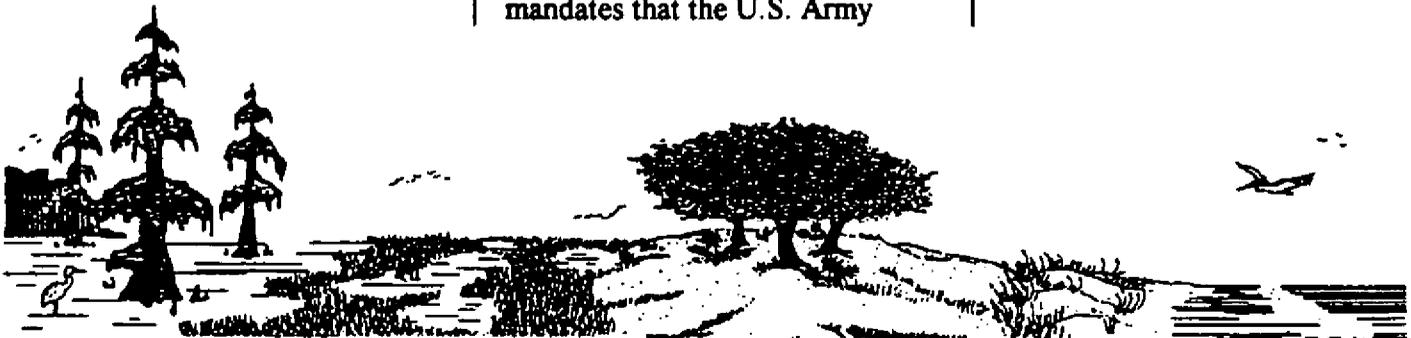
## Water Resources Development Act of 1996 Helps Louisiana Coastal Wetlands

With the passage of the federal Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) of 1996, Louisiana's coastal wetlands restoration effort received a positive 'shot in the arm.' The Act provides \$7.5 million to help offset the cost of relocating oyster lease holders located in the Davis Pond freshwater diversion project impact area. Some 8,000 acres of oyster leases are located in the project area. DNR Secretary Jack Caldwell estimates that nearly 80,000 acres of deteriorating marshlands will be restored as a result of this project.

Additionally, the Act provides for the lowering of the state's Coastal Wetlands Planning, Protection, and Restoration Act (CWPPRA) required cost-share from 25 percent to 10 percent upon completion and approval of a Coastal Wetlands Conservation Plan. This reduced cost-share will be effective only for projects authorized during calendar years 1996 and 1997. The cost-share rate applied after 1997 will depend on the results of CWPPRA reauthorization which is set for Congressional action in 1998.

The 1996 WRDA also mandates that the U.S. Army

Corps of Engineers (COE) study potential enhancements and effectiveness of the Bonnet Carre freshwater diversion project and report to Congress by January 31, 1997. A few months ago Governor Mike Foster announced that Louisiana would not commit to the project. Support for the project, however, continues to be strong in Mississippi. The WRDA-Bonnet Carre action was apparently taken as a result of requests made by the state of Mississippi and Senator Trent Lott.



THE LOUISIANA COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE PROVIDES EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IN PROGRAMS AND EMPLOYMENT. LOUISIANA STATE UNIVERSITY AND A. & M. COLLEGE, LOUISIANA PARISH GOVERNING BODIES, SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY, AND UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE COOPERATING

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## Draft Coastal Wetlands Conservation Plan Public Input Meetings Set

Four public workshops were held in October 1996 in an effort to help the Louisiana Department of Natural Resources (DNR) develop a comprehensive Coastal Wetlands Conservation Plan (hereafter referred to as the "Plan") for Louisiana. The four meetings were co-sponsored by both DNR and the LSU Agricultural Center's Louisiana Cooperative Extension Service (LCES).

Through this plan, Louisiana is attempting to achieve "no net loss" of coastal wetlands as a result of developmental (permitted) activities. Key benefits to the state that will result from an approved Plan include:

- (1) Increased availability of federal coastal restoration funding from the Coastal Wetlands Planning, Protection and Restoration Act (CWPPRA) - the required state cost-share will be reduced from 25% to 10% for projects authorized in 1996 and 1997 once federal Plan approval is achieved,
- (2) honors congressional intent outlined in the CWPPRA legislation,
- (3) assists in CWPPRA reauthorization (which is set for Congressional vote in 1998) by convincingly showing a state's willingness to address wetland loss caused by permitted developmental activities,
- (4) assists in the implementation of Louisiana's new coastal mitigation program, and
- (5) helps assure the continued provision of the many important coastal wetland

functions and values such as storm surge protection, flood protection, recreational and commercial fisheries productivity, water purification, wildlife habitat, nature-based tourism attractions and the unique cultural diversity so important to south Louisiana.

More than 200 participants attended, and all comments and questions were recorded. Comments and issues raised at the workshops were considered carefully when DNR developed the draft Conservation Plan.

In an attempt to obtain public input on the draft Coastal Wetlands Conservation Plan, DNR will again co-sponsor (with the LSU Agricultural Center's Louisiana Cooperative Extension Service) five public meetings around the state in January 1997. The schedule is:

<u>Date</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Time</u>
January 14	Baton Rouge J. N. Efferson Hall, LSU, Rm. 214	10:00 a.m.
January 21	Lake Charles Extension Service Office	7:00 p.m.
January 28	Metairie Yenni Parish Government Bldg.	2:00 p.m.
January 29	Lafayette USGS - Nat. Wetlands Res. Center	2:00 p.m.
January 30	Houma Extension Service Office	7:00 p.m.

The draft Plan was mailed to all workshop participants in mid-December 1996. All other

interested parties can obtain a copy by contacting Rocky Hinds, Program Manager, Coastal Management Division, P.O. 44497, Baton Rouge, LA 70804-4487, phone (504) 342 - 7998. Everyone interested in coastal restoration, mitigation and permitting issues should plan to attend.

For more information about the draft Coastal Wetland Conservation Plan and the federal approval process, please do not hesitate to call.

## Coastal Land Loss Study Results Released

The LSU Coastal Studies Institute and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (COE) have recently completed a study titled, *Natural and Human Causes of Coastal Land Loss in Louisiana*. Researchers involved in the project included Shea Penland, Irv Mendelsohn and Linda Wayne of LSU and Del Britsch of the COE. The study covered the deltaic plain of southeast Louisiana. In the study, the researchers attempted to determine and quantify the forms, processes, and causes of coastal land loss from 1930 through 1990 through the use of Geographical Information Systems (GIS). Land losses were classified as either 'natural' or 'human caused.'

Preliminary study results showed that from 1930 to 1990 more than 689,000 acres of coastal wetlands were lost in the southeast Louisiana deltaic plain. Approximately 70% of this loss was in interior wetlands and about 30% was shoreline related. Additionally, the study

team classified about 46% of the loss as 'natural' and 54% of the loss as 'human caused.'

As a result of this study a series of detailed GIS draft maps have been developed illustrating coastal wetland losses over time broken down by form and process. Anyone who would like to review these maps should contact Shea Penland at (504) 388-8670 or Del Britsch at (504) 862-1022.

## Land and Water Conservation Fund

The Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF), established by Congress in 1964, provides the primary funding used to help federal and state agencies purchase and manage areas for outdoor recreation. Federal land management agencies, such as the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Park Service, use these funds to acquire available inholdings at national wildlife refuges, national forests, and national parks. Funds are apportioned to state agencies through the

National Park Service for additions to state and local recreational areas.

Originally the fund was authorized at \$900 million annually, with funds coming from offshore oil and gas lease royalties. Appropriations to the LWCF, however, have never reached the authorized level, with fiscal year 1996 appropriations dropping to the lowest level since 1974 at \$138 million.

With growing concerns about overcrowding in most public recreation areas, President Ronald Reagan set up the President's Commission on American Outdoors in the mid 1980s to help determine public recreation area needs. This commission was headed by then Governor Lamar Alexander from Tennessee. After many hearings held throughout the United States, the Commission recommended that a federal trust fund be established to assure that at least \$1 billion annually be appropriated for recreation and associated natural resource needs. Legislation was introduced in two congressional sessions to accomplish this goal, but

proposals did not make it out of committee.

More recently, an advisory committee commissioned by the Interior Department was established in 1994 to again look at public recreation area needs. The final advisory committee report recommended a network of parks, preserves, open spaces, greenways and recreation areas well distributed throughout the nation so they would be accessible to all citizens. To date, little action has been taken as a result of the committee's recommendations.

For more information about the LWCF and/or state priority acquisition areas, contact my office.

## **'Restore America's Estuaries' Initiative Begins**

On September 18, 1996, a 'Restore America's Estuaries' (RAE) initiative was kicked off by an alliance of eight regional environmental groups from around the U.S. Members of the RAE Alliance include the Coalition To Restore Coastal Louisiana (Louisiana), American Littoral Society (New Jersey), Chesapeake Bay Foundation (Maryland), Conservation Law Foundation (Gulf of Maine), North Carolina Coastal Foundation, People for

Puget Sound (Washington State), Save San Francisco Bay (California) and Save the Bay (Narragansett Bay, Rhode Island).

The primary goal of the initiative is to put the restoration of America's estuaries on the national agenda, and the mission is to encourage policies and actions that help stop estuarine habitat loss throughout the nation. Actions that will be encouraged by the Alliance include (1) establishment of habitat restoration programs, (2) development of incentives for public and private investment, (3) development of an information clearinghouse for raising public awareness and (4) passage by Congress of an Estuary-Habitat Restoration Act.

For more information about the RAE initiative, contact the Coalition To Restore Coastal Louisiana at (504) 344-6555.

## **New DNR Appointments Made by Governor Foster**

Governor Foster recently named Katherine G. Vaughan as assistant secretary of the Louisiana Department of Natural Resources (DNR). In this capacity Ms. Vaughan will oversee work conducted by DNR's Office of Coastal

Restoration and Management. This Office is responsible for the state's wetlands resources, implements Louisiana's Coastal Wetlands Conservation and Restoration Plan, and has regulatory authority over coastal resources.

Ms. Vaughan left her position as partner in the law firm of Milling, Bensen, Woodward, Hillyer, Pierson and Miller in New Orleans to become the first woman assistant secretary in the department's history. She has worked throughout her career in the natural resources field and has extensive knowledge of state and federal law relating to oil and gas, natural resources, land use, mineral development, environmental compliance, lease and operating rights, remediation, and site restoration.

Additionally, Governor Foster named Steve Mathies as DNR undersecretary. Dr. Mathies comes to DNR after serving as director of the Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary Program for the past five years. He also will provide leadership for the state's ever-challenging coastal restoration effort. Everyone welcomes these two new appointees, and we wish them great success.

## CWPPRA 6th Priority List Candidate Projects

Listed below are the 20 projects approved by the CWPPRA Planning and Evaluation Subcommittee for 1996. These 20 projects will be considered for funding in February 1997 when the CWPPRA Task Force takes a final vote on the 6th priority list projects. The projects will be evaluated in terms of the wetlands benefits they provide, cost-effectiveness, and other important factors associated with each individual project.

<u>Project Code</u>	<u>Project Title</u>	<u>Parish</u>	<u>Est. Cost (millions \$)</u>
PTE-15b(iv)	Bayou Boeuf Pump Station	Assumption	\$30
PTE-26	Penchant Basin Plan	Terrebonne	\$30 over 3 years
PBA-44	Sediment Diversion at Bootville	Plaquemines	(cost not listed)
TE-7f	Lake Boudreaux Basin Freshwater Introduction & Hydrologic Mgmt.	Terrebonne	\$4.6 million
CW-4	Long-term Marsh Creation at Sixtymile Point	Plaquemines	\$13
CW-5	Long-term Marsh Creation East of Atchafalaya Bay	Terrebonne	\$14
PBA-12b	Barataria Bay Waterway Bank Protection East	Jefferson	\$1.3
CW-1	Dedicated Dredging in the Mississippi River	Plaquemines	(cost not listed)
TV5/7	Marsh Island Hydrologic Restoration	Iberia	\$3.0
CW-6	Dedicated Dredging in Oilfield Canals	Lafourche	\$4.5
XCS-48	Black Bayou Hydrologic Restoration	Cameron	(cost not listed)
PMR-10	Delta-wide Crevasses	Plaquemines	(cost not listed)
PME-2	Breakwaters at Rockefeller Refuge	Cameron	\$4.5
PBA-48	Myrtle Grove Siphon Enlargement	Plaquemines & Jefferson	\$25.0
XMR-10b	Channel Armor Gaps West	Plaquemines	\$4.5
XTV-25	Oaks/Avery Canals Hydrologic Restoration	Vermilion & Iberia	\$2.7
PTV-19b	Sediment Trapping at the Jaws	St. Mary	\$1.0
BA-3/4	Assume Operation & Maintenance of Siphons at Naomi, Violet, and West Point a la Hache	Plaquemines & Jefferson	\$4.2
CS-2	Rycade Canal Assumption of Operation & Maintenance	Cameron	\$1.1
PBA-11	Tiger/Red Pass Diversion	Plaquemines	<u>\$2.5</u>
Total			\$115.9

## **New Federal Wildlife Refuge Established**

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) and The Nature Conservancy of Louisiana recently announced the establishment of Mandalay National Wildlife Refuge in Terrebonne Parish. The refuge is located near Houma, and encompasses approximately 4,600 acres of expansive marshes, forested wetlands and live oak ridges. The FWS plans to develop the refuge for public sport fishing, wildlife observation and limited hunting.

The site was purchased several years ago by The Nature Conservancy with grants from Dow Chemical U.S.A., the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, the North American Wetlands Conservation Council and local supporters. The Conservancy donated the tract to the FWS for development of the new refuge.

The new refuge provides important habitat for the federally protected bald eagle and supports tens of thousands of wintering waterfowl. Other wildlife species found on the refuge include alligators, furbearers, neotropical migratory birds and white-tailed deer. Several rookeries of ibis, egrets and herons are also found on the site.

## **New Publication - 'Wastewater Disposal Options for Landowners'**

In a cooperative effort between the Gulf of Mexico Program and the Mississippi Cooperative Extension Service, a new publication titled *Wastewater Disposal Options for Landowners* has been made available to the public. The book is ideal for homeowners interested in reducing nonpoint source pollution caused by improperly treated sewage from failing septic systems in residential areas. Many studies

have shown that sewage discharges significantly contribute to oyster fishing closures in many Gulf of Mexico states (including Louisiana).

Wastewater treatment options covered in the book include two primary treatment options: (1) septic tanks and (2) aerobic treatment plants; and several secondary treatment and disposal methods: (1) underground absorption fields, (2) sand filters, (3) sand mounds, (4) spray irrigation, (5) plant/rock filters and (6) subsurface drip irrigation. Another section covers tips on properly maintaining on-site septic systems and names and addresses of state agencies where additional information can be obtained.

If you are interested in obtaining a copy of this publication, contact Belinda Duke, Extension Environmental Specialist, Gulf of Mexico Program, Bldg. 1200, Room 103, Stennis Space Center, MS 39529.

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## **Use of Vegetative Filters to Reduce Nonpoint Pollution**

Results of studies on sediment, nutrient, pesticide and bacteria movement from cropland and trapping by vegetative filters, conducted by researchers at the University of Kentucky, produced interesting findings. In the first study, three tillage treatments (no-till, chisel-plow and

conventional plow) were evaluated to determine runoff water volume, sediment losses and certain pesticide losses on an area with 9% slope. In the second study, the trapping efficiency of vegetated filter strips consisting of a natural mixture of Kentucky Bluegrass and fescue sod was evaluated following simulated rainfall. Filter strip sizes of

15, 30, and 45 feet in length were compared for two tillage treatments (no-till and conventional tillage). In the third study, the 15 and 30 foot grassed filters were used to determine bacteria trapping efficiency.

Conclusions reported in the study are:

- (1) As tillage intensity was reduced, water, sediment, nitrate-nitrogen, ammonium-nitrogen, phosphorus and atrazine runoff significantly decreased.
- (2) Thirty foot grass filter strips were more consistent than either 15 or 45 foot strips in reducing water volume, sediment, nitrate-nitrogen and atrazine in surface runoff from cropped areas regardless of tillage system. Thirty foot filter strips were also slightly more effective at trapping fecal bacteria than 15 foot strips.

- (3) Grassed filters gave mixed results in removing bacteria from runoff of manure-applied fields. Total fecal bacteria were reduced up to 95%, however, filter runoff continued to contain bacterial concentrations in excess of the primary and recreational contact standards for surface water.

To obtain a complete copy of the study, contact my office.

Reference: W.O. Thom, R. L. Blevins, and M. S. Coyne. *Use of filters to reduce non-point pollution.* In *Proceeding of the 1996 Southern Soil Fertility Conference*, Memphis, Tenn. October 15-16, 1996. pp 8-11.



### **CWPPRA Home Page**

The Coastal Wetlands Planning, Protection, and Restoration Act (CWPPRA) recently joined the electronic age with the development of a CWPPRA home page. The home page contains a wealth of information about one of the largest coastal wetland restoration challenges in the world, including numerous reports, maps and imagery concerning the coastal wetland preservation program in Louisiana. They include (1) a CWPPRA overview, (2) Louisiana land loss maps, (3) restoration plan and updates, (4) project monitoring information, (5) the WaterMarks Newsletter (put out by CWPPRA) and (6) current and upcoming events.

The CWPPRA home page address is: [www.nwrc.gov/cwppra.html](http://www.nwrc.gov/cwppra.html)

## Extension Service Reports Available

Within the past few months, I have written two reports that may interest you:

(1) Louisiana Wetland Conservation Initiatives - 1996 - This is a brief summary of most wetland conservation policies, programs and funding sources that are pertinent to Louisiana.

(2) Conservation Provisions of the 1996 Farm Bill - This paper outlines the key conservation provisions that were included in the 1996 Farm Bill (WRP, CRP, EQIP, WHIP, Swmapbuster, HEL, etc.)

To obtain a free copy of either or both, please contact my office.

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## LSU Agricultural Center Home Page

Information about the Louisiana Cooperative Extension Service and the Louisiana Agricultural Experiment Station is available on the LSU Ag Center web site at

<http://www.agctr.lsu.edu/wwwac>

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Additionally, I also now have an individual e-mail address ([pcoreil@agctr.lsu.edu](mailto:pcoreil@agctr.lsu.edu)). If you want to receive *Louisiana Wetlands News* via e-mail, simply send me an e-mail message so I can add you to the Wetlands Newsgroup.

For more information about any topic discussed in this newsletter, or to obtain wetland or coastal resources-related information, contact your parish Cooperative Extension Service office.

As we approach the Christmas season, I would like to wish all of you good health and a happy and prosperous New Year!

Sincerely,



Paul Coreil  
Associate Specialist  
(Wetland & Coastal Resources)