



Southwest Coastal Louisiana Study

January 2014

U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS

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Project Purpose

The purpose of the Southwest Coastal Louisiana Study is to identify a plan to provide hurricane and storm damage risk reduction and coastal ecosystem restoration in the southwest portion of the State of Louisiana.

Project Location

The Southwest Coastal Louisiana Study focuses on a 4,700 square mile study area located in Calcasieu, Cameron and Vermilion Parishes.

Project Need

Given the area's low elevation, flat terrain, and close proximity to the Gulf of Mexico, the people, economy, and unique environment and cultural heritage of southwest Louisiana are at risk due to flooding from tidal surge and waves associated with tropical storms. Land subsidence, combined with sea-level rise, is expected to increase the potential for coastal flooding, shoreline erosion, saltwater intrusion, and loss of wetland and Chenier habitats in the future.

Project Description

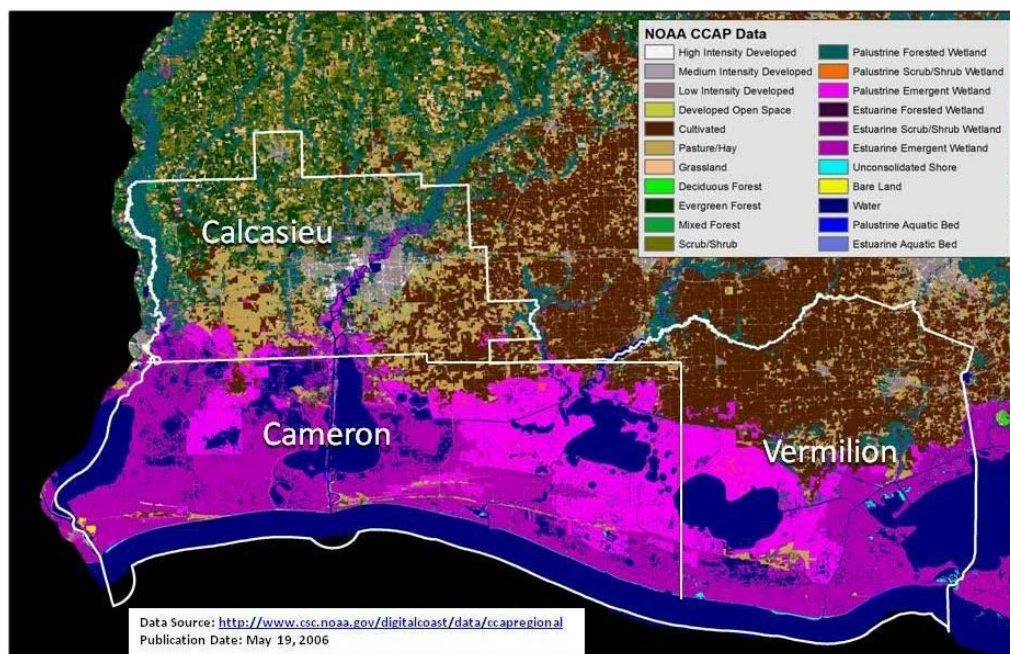
The Southwest Coastal Louisiana Study is the first Federally-authorized feasibility-level study with the dual purpose of hurricane and storm damage risk reduction, through the National Economic Development (NED) plan, and coastal ecosystem restoration, through the National Ecosystem Restoration (NER) plan, for the southwest coastal portion of the State of Louisiana.

The planning team used information from prior Federal, state and local efforts to narrow the study focus to the most critical remaining areas. Problems within the study area include:

- Flooding from tidal surge and waves associated with hurricanes and tropical storms.
- Increased flood durations in wetlands, resulting in wetland loss.
- Erosion of channel banks and shorelines, resulting in wetland loss.
- Deforestation and mining of chenier ridges.

Opportunities identified by the planning team to solve these problems include:

- Incorporate structural and nonstructural coastal storm damage reduction solutions to reduce the risk of damages and prevent loss of community cohesion.
- Improve internal system hydrology to restore wetlands.
- Manage salinity levels to maintain fresh and intermediate marsh.
- Reduce bank and shoreline erosion.
- Prevent loss of significant historic and cultural resources.





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The Tentatively Selected Plan (TSP), as described in the “Southwest Coastal Louisiana Draft Integrated Feasibility Report and Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (EIS),” provides non-structural hurricane and storm damage risk reduction measures and ecosystem restoration features in the study area at a cost of approximately \$1.5 billion.

The proposed risk reduction measures under the NED TSP include:

- residential structure elevation;
- flood proofing;
- and the acquisition of qualifying structures to reduce potential damages from future tropical storms and hurricanes.

The proposed ecosystem restoration measures under the NER TSP include:

- nine marsh restoration measures which would restore 8,579 acres and nourish 4,026 acres, resulting in 8,714 net acres;
- two hydrologic and salinity control measures to restore 6,092 net acres;
- five shoreline protection measures that protect 5,509 net acres of shoreline and which would span 266,884 linear feet;
- the preservation of the historic Sabine Lake oyster reef;
- and a Chenier reforestation program that includes invasive species control and planting seedling trees on 1,413 acres in multiple locations in Cameron and Vermilion Parishes.

Project Status

The Southwest Coastal Feasibility Study was authorized on December 7, 2005 by the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, U.S. House of Representatives, Resolution, Docket 2747, Southwest Coastal Louisiana. A reconnaissance study was completed in 2007 and recommended moving to the feasibility phase. The feasibility study was initiated in January 2009. The State of Louisiana’s Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority is the 50/50 cost share partner on the study.

Three public scoping meetings were held in March 2009 in Cameron, Calcasieu and Vermillion Parishes to identify problems, needs, and opportunities throughout the study area. Attendees included, but were not limited to, private citizens, stakeholders, non-governmental organizations, and political representatives.

The Draft Integrated Feasibility Report and Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) has been completed and is currently available for public and agency review. The public comment period ends Sunday, January 26, 2014.

Additional feasibility work will be completed on engineering, cost estimates, environmental, economic, real estate and construction needs of the plan. Public review comments and feasibility-level details will be included in a final report that will be made available for state and agency and public review before the Chief of Engineers makes a final project recommendation.

For more information, and for copies of the Draft Integrated Feasibility Report and Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement, please visit the project webpage:

<http://www.mvn.usace.army.mil/About/Projects/SouthwestCoastal.aspx>