



**US Army Corps
of Engineers®**
New Orleans District

News Release

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Corps of Engineers and state of Louisiana sign historic Coast 2050 study agreement

New Orleans – The New Orleans District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and the Louisiana Department of Natural Resources today held an historic signing ceremony in Baton Rouge to launch a major coastal wetlands study.

With the signing of the Coast 2050 Feasibility Cost Share, the agencies this month will initiate a \$6-million feasibility study of the Barataria Basin. The study will be completed in September 2001.

New Orleans District Engineer Col. Thomas Julich and DNR Secretary Jack Caldwell signed the cost share agreement that requires each agency to provide about \$3 million over the next two years to fund the study.

“This is potentially the largest and most ambitious effort to date by the Corps of Engineers as it applies to coastal restoration,” said Julich. “We can relate this to the massive effort to build the Mississippi River and Tributaries Project after the 1927 flood.”

Caldwell said the basin study would lay the foundation for pursuing funding sources other than the Breaux Act. “We will be preparing ready-to-go projects so that we can take advantage of potential funding sources such as the Water Resources Development Act and possibly CARA monies (offshore oil and gas royalty revenues) if current federal legislation passes this year,” Caldwell said.

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Add 1 – Coast 2050 Signing

“The Breaux Act has emphasized construction of coastal wetlands restoration and protection projects,” said Sen. Breaux. “I am very pleased to see the Coast 2050 plan builds upon the success of the Breaux Act, which will maintain Louisiana’s wetlands for our children and grandchildren.”

“This is more than just another ‘study.’ This is the beginning of a comprehensive, aggressive plan to save Louisiana’s coastline,” added Congressman Billy Tauzin of Chackbay, who spearheaded the effort to secure federal funding for the project. “Coast 2050 is the greatest legacy we can leave to our children and to future generations.”

The Barataria Basin was selected as the first area for study and action because it is the most critical, losing about 11 square miles annually. When completed the study could result in restoration projects totaling as much as \$3.5 billion within that highly impacted coastal basin. The study, entitled “Louisiana Coastal Area, Louisiana-Ecosystem Restoration, Barrier Island Restoration, Marsh Creation, and River Diversion, Barataria Basin Feasibility Study,” will focus on marsh creation, barrier island restoration and river diversion strategies. Other coastal feasibility studies are planned in the future.

There have been many efforts by local, state and federal interests over the last 30 years to understand and address coastal land loss problems. Regional and local projects to restore and protect coastal Louisiana have been accomplished through the Breaux Act. And initiatives such as the Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary Program have increased environmental awareness in the state and nation.

In response to the catastrophic rate of coastal land loss in Louisiana, a grass roots effort termed the Coast 2050 Initiative was conducted across coastal Louisiana under the Breaux Act banner. Coast 2050 stakeholders participated in a series of workshops throughout 1998 that addressed coastal loss and strategies required to address the problems.

Since 1991, Breaux Act funding to Louisiana has amounted to about \$40 million a year. However, there is still a large disparity between the trends of loss and the present restoration program. Federal and state officials overseeing the effort estimate that an additional \$14 billion in funding will be needed to fully implement the Coast 2050 strategy and restore a collapsing coastal ecosystem.

The signing took place in the governor’s Press Conference Room at the State Capitol. Coastal officials from across the state, legislators, environmentalists and activists attended the ceremony.