Maintain Land Bridge between Caillou Lake and Gulf of Mexico

January 2013

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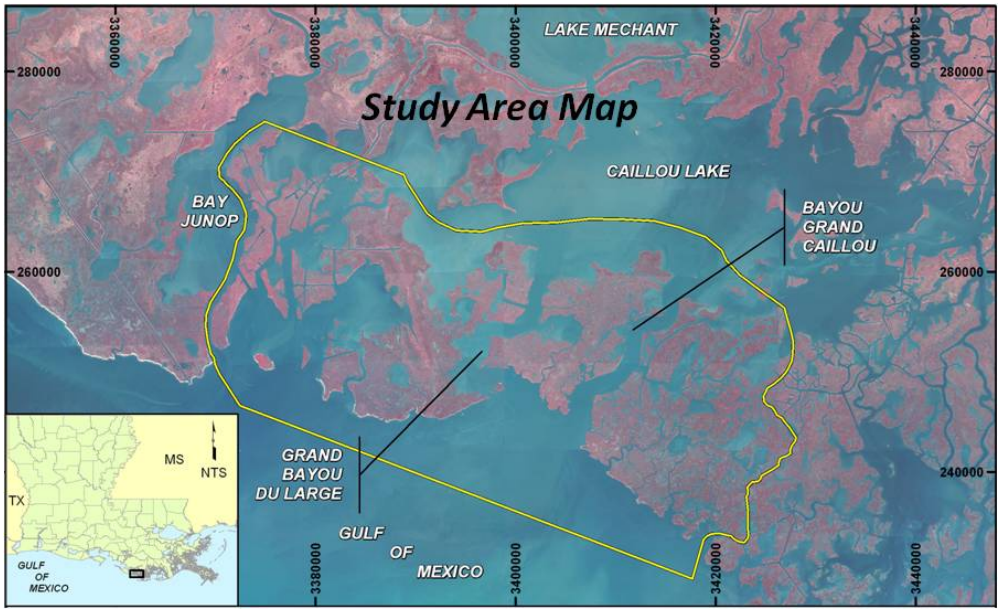
The Louisiana Coastal Area (LCA) program focuses on critical, near-term ecosystem restoration projects and studies, as approved in the Water Resources Development Act of 2007. The program goal is to slow the current trend of coast-wide wetland loss and resource degradation.

Several restoration techniques are employed in this program, including freshwater diversions, marsh creation and barrier island restoration. Overall, the program is focused on a systematic approach to coastal restoration using larger projects to restore natural features and ecosystem processes.



The Maintain Land Bridge between Caillou Lake and the Gulf of Mexico project is a shoreline protection and marsh restoration project designed to reduce the current degradation of the land bridge between the Gulf of Mexico and Caillou Lake. The project was authorized under the Water Resources Development Act of 2007 - Section 7006(e)(1) and the State of Louisiana's Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority (CPRA) is the cost-share partner in the development and implementation of this project.

Project Location

The study area, approximately 60 mi^2 (38,000 ac^2) in size, is located in south central Terrebonne Parish, about 38 miles southeast of Morgan City, Louisiana. The land bridge area encompasses approximately 2,800 acres of wetlands and is located between Caillou Lake (also known as Sister Lake) to the north and the Gulf of Mexico and between Bayou Grand du Large and Bayou Grand Caillou.

Project Goals

The goal of the project is to reduce the current trend of degradation of the land bridge between the Gulf of Mexico and Caillou Lake (Sister Lake) to achieve and sustain a coastal ecosystem that can support and protect the environment, economy and culture of southern Louisiana.

Objectives

The objectives of the project, with respect to the study area, include the following:

- Preserve the ecological function and diversity of Caillou Lake by reducing the loss of wetlands and other land forms in the land bridge separating the Gulf of Mexico from Caillou Lake over the 50-year period of analysis.
- Prevent, reduce and/or reverse salinity influences on water quality and affected aquatic and wetland habitats in and around Caillou Lake by preventing the formation of new hydrologic connections, and restoring wetland habitats in existing man-made connections, in the land bridge separating the Gulf of Mexico and Caillou Lake over the 50-year period of analysis.

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- Restore to historic conditions various wetland habitats that provide essential habitat for terrestrial and aquatic species on the land bridge separating the Gulf of Mexico and Caillou Lake over the 50-year period of analysis.

Project Features

This restoration project would maintain the land bridge between the Gulf of Mexico and Caillou Lake. Shoreline protection is envisioned as the primary project feature, although some marsh restoration may be necessary to restore the historic geomorphic function of the land bridge. Shoreline protection could involve areas along Grand Bayou du Large, Bayou Grand Caillou, and/or the Gulf of Mexico and could use rock armoring and/or marsh creation to fill broken marsh areas to prevent new channels from breaching bayou banks thereby allowing new connections between the Gulf and Caillou Lake. Gulf shoreline armoring could be needed to protect these features from further erosion and might be required where shoreline retreat and loss of oyster reefs have allowed increased water exchange between the Gulf and the interior water bodies.

Project Status

The Feasibility Study was initiated on 5 June 2009 and a draft Tentatively Selected Plan (TSP) was identified on 13 September 2010. This TSP includes a segmented revetment along the Gulf shoreline of the land bridge, and marsh restoration in the most critical inland areas. A separate National Ecosystem Restoration (NER) plan was identified. The TSP is an implementable element of the NER plan, is within the cost and scope of the authorization, has stand-alone utility, and can be justified based on ecosystem restoration benefits.

By request of the State of Louisiana's Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority in October 2012, the feasibility study for this project has been suspended.

Anyone seeking additional information on the Maintain Land Bridge between Caillou Lake and Gulf of Mexico project can visit the Louisiana Coastal Area program website at ***www.lca.gov***.

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