



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

News Release

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Multi-agency office established for coastal restoration

NEW ORLEANS--The formal name is Louisiana Coastal Area for 19,000 square miles that is in peril of being reclaimed by the sea – at some point well in the future.

To head off that dire prospect, more than 30 people have gathered in one big room in New Orleans, at the U.S. Army of Engineers district office at 7400 Leake Ave. These men and women are the Louisiana Coastal Restoration Collocated Team. It is expected eventually to be 50 strong.

It's got a jawbreaker of a name because they are all working in one place – that is, collocated – and they come from eight government agencies:

Six are federal agencies:

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, National Marine Fisheries Service, National Resources Conservation Service, U.S. Geological Survey and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

And two are state agencies:

Louisiana Department of Natural Resources and Louisiana Department of Transportation & Development.

The Coast 2050 Project is expected to cost \$14 billion – and to save almost 20,000 square miles of coastal Louisiana, from Mississippi to Texas.

“By having the agencies together in one office, we have better coordination and get more work done,” said Tom Podany, senior project manager for the Corps’ New Orleans District. Other district members on the team are from its Project Management, Engineering, Environmental and Economics sections. There is also representation from the Corps’ Waterways Experiment Station in Vicksburg, Miss.

(more)

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As the project grows, the team will expand. As it moves into new phases, new skills will be added, such as people from the district's Real Estate Division.

Collocation is precedent setting for the New Orleans District just to pull together such a diverse group within the district, and more so for the people from other agencies, said John Saia, deputy for Project Management in New Orleans District.

Many of the people in Room 137 are at work on the Louisiana Coastal Area – Ecosystem Restoration Project, which grew out of the Coast 2050 concept.

“This is the ‘core’ team,” Saia said.

Hundreds more people, from the Corps and the other agencies, will eventually be contributing, Saia said. “We want to include all ideas and diverse views in developing this project.”

“It will take a lot of people and a lot of minds working together,” Saia said.

Specific benefits of collocation, the team says, include:

--Facilitation of EPA participation in the review of the preliminary draft EIS (environmental impact statement) for the marsh creation component of the Barataria Basin feasibility study.

--Coordination with regulatory and planning staff on project, including Grand Isle development issues, the proposed Port Fourchon maritime ridge project and EPA's proposed Maurepas Swamp Diversion.

--Coordination with Corps CWPPRA (Coastal Wetlands Planning, Protection and Restoration Act) staff on freshwater diversions and other issues.

--Increase in opportunities for regulatory site visits, while improving coordination on both specific permit issues and mitigation banking efforts.

Podany is optimistic that the collocation will improve communications and cooperation among agencies, reduce response times and build mutual trust.

“The enormous challenge facing the collocated team requires a new way of thinking,” Podany said. “Business as usual will not get the job done.”

