



News Release

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CORRECTION: In paragraph two, we in Louisiana are losing a football field every 35 minutes, not every 24 hours.

Louisiana Coastal Area Ecosystem Restoration Study signed by Mississippi Valley Division Engineer

VICKSBURG, Miss. – The Louisiana Coastal Area Ecosystem Restoration Study Report was signed Friday and sent to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers headquarters by Brig. Gen. Robert Crear, Mississippi Valley Division Engineer. The study, commonly referred to as LCA, maps out a strategy for restoration of Louisiana’s nationally significant coastal wetlands, and has been sent to USACE for final policy review.

“The efforts of all parties involved in bringing this study to fruition are commendable,” said Crear, who is also commander, Mississippi Valley Division and President-designee of the Mississippi River Commission. “With the coast of Louisiana losing the equivalent of a football field every 35 minutes, this national treasure must be restored, protected and preserved.”

The study area covers 19,000 square miles along the Louisiana coast from Mississippi to Texas. The Mississippi River’s resources are considered vital to the restoration. In this area the federal government and state of Louisiana have been conducting ecosystem restoration efforts for the past 14 years under the Breaux Act. In addition, the scientific community in Louisiana is recognized internationally for expertise in climate and wetland research.

Important upcoming dates include a 30-day state and agency review, from November 5 to December 6, before the Chief of Engineers prepares his report and sends it to the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works on December 30.

The lessons learned and extensive experience gained from past restoration and research efforts have been applied in the LCA Study and can continue to be applied in a systematic way to develop and implement a coast wide plan for addressing the land loss problem and critical needs facing the coastal area.

Opportunities for ecosystem restoration include:

- Freshwater re-introductions by diverting water from the Mississippi river into hydrologic basins;
- Barrier island restoration through placement of sand from offshore sources or the Mississippi River to sustain geomorphic structures. This would provide additional protection from hurricane storm surges and protect the ecology of estuarine bays and marshes by reducing gulf influences, as well as protect nationally important water bird nesting areas;
- Hydrologic modification, such as degrading excavated dredged material banks, to help restore salinity and marsh inundation patterns and provide fishery access in previously unavailable habitats; and
- The use of sediment material from dedicated or maintenance dredging (e.g. beneficial use) to create a marsh platform, which could create large amounts of coastal habitat quickly.

The recommended plan has seven major components: five critical restoration projects, a science and technology program, and demonstration projects described as follows:

Near-Term Critical Restoration Features. The recommended plan includes a number of critical restoration projects, five of which are recommended for near-term continued study, design, and implementation. These five projects address the most critical ecological needs of the coastal area and address a range of effects essential for success in restoring the coast. The five near-term critical restoration features are:

- Mississippi River Gulf Outlet Environmental Restoration Features
- Small Diversion at Hope Canal
- Barataria Basin Barrier Shoreline Restoration, Caminada Headland, Shell Island
- Small Bayou Lafourche Reintroduction

- Medium Diversion at Myrtle Grove with Dedicated Dredging

Science and technology program. The recommended plan includes a Science and Technology Program over the initial 10 years of the LCA program. The major goal of the program would be to decrease scientific and engineering uncertainties of restoration efforts and to optimize restoration opportunities.

Demonstration projects. The recommend plan includes funding over a 10-year period for demonstration projects to be developed by the Science and Technology Program. These projects will cost a maximum of \$25 million each.

“The legacy we leave to the people of our nation’s valuable coast will be greatly influenced by what we do to restore this vital environmental and economic national asset,” Crear added. “This area serves as an economic engine and extremely valuable habitat for our nation.”

More information <http://www.lca.gov>.