

September 20th, 2006

The Honorable Kathleen Blanco
Governor of Louisiana
And Louisiana Congressional Delegation
State of Louisiana
P.O. Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

Dear Governor Blanco
and Members of Louisiana Congressional Delegation

Like you, we are pleased that the passage of the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) finally seems imminent. That bill, which is now in conference, contains several provisions vital to the State of Louisiana, most notably the authorization of a critically needed coastal restoration program, the Louisiana Coastal Area (LCA) authorization. We are also sure that you are as disappointed as we are by a provision inserted by Mississippi Senator Trent Lott that would hold the LCA hostage in order to force the State to change its position on the Bonnet Carre' river diversion project. As written this is extortion pure and simple that places the interests of Mississippi oysters ahead of our State's sovereign duty to protect its citizens, communities and natural resources. Please know that we will stand with you to strip this provision as the bill moves to conference.

This is not a matter of Louisiana being indifferent to our neighbor's needs. We and the State have long stood ready to work with Mississippi to address its needs while we meet our own. The simple fact is, though, that the Bonnet Carre' project as originally conceived and presently sought by Senator Lott was not the best vehicle for either state.

Science indicates that the 20 plus year old Bonnet Carre' proposal has little potential to achieve its stated goals and would likely induce significant ecological harm to Lake Pontchartrain. The goal of the Bonnet Carre' proposal was to increase oyster production 70 miles away in the Mississippi Sound. Oyster production there decreased because of increasing salinities. This resulted from another federal project, the Mississippi River Gulf Outlet (MRGO), and the subsequent demise of southeast Louisiana's coastal wetlands.

There are better ways of addressing that problem than a single diversion project that itself would jeopardize the health of Lake Pontchartrain. We can and

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should work together to close the MRGO and pursue a series of river water introduction projects into the Pontchartrain Basin. Ironically some of those very measures are covered by the LCA that Senator Lott's amendment would hold hostage. This is an example of exactly what is wrong with the way our nation develops its water resources agenda and why there is so little trust and confidence among the American public in that agenda. This is no small matter in that it goes to the very core of who controls our destiny and the discharge of our duties. There is room for compromise on the best ways of dealing with the needs that the Bonnet Carre' project was intended to address. However, as to the principle of deciding what our State's project and funding priorities are, it is our State, our elected officials, and our people who will make those calls.

We commend you for your service and are ready to be of service as you work to make this WRDA bill one that truly serves our people well.

Very truly yours,

Carlton Dufrechou
Executive Director
Lake Pontchartrain Basin Foundation

Mark Davis
Executive Director
Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana

Ccs: LPBF Board
CRCL Board

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