

September 19, 2005

## **Where We Stand, What We Are Doing**

### **A Statement of the Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana**

The crisis that is unfolding in the wake of Hurricane Katrina has affected all Louisianans and all Americans. It has created a humanitarian, civic, and economic crisis that is unparalleled in our nation's history. The Coalition's mission of achieving a south Louisiana that is ecologically, culturally, and economically strong and sustainable has never been so challenged—or more important. The Coalition has long worked to sound the alarm that this catastrophe was looming and that it could be avoided or at least better prepared for. Now that it has occurred we are working harder than ever to make sure it never happens again and to ensure that the communities, culture and natural environment are healthier, more vibrant, and sustainable than before. We also will support efforts to expand opportunities across our communities so that all segments of our society share in the promise of a brighter future.

Though our fundamental mission has not changed, our opportunities have and we are acting to make the most of them.

**The time to commit to the restoration program for coastal Louisiana is now.** The Coast 2050 plan mapped out a program that was project to cost \$14 billion dollars to implement over time. This program is more essential than ever and the price tag now seems incredibly cheap compared to the costs of doing too little or waiting too long. The choices we framed in our No Time to Lose report are clearer than ever and we must choose a revitalized coast.

**Commit to “Category 5” protection for our major population centers.** If one thing is certain, it is clear that we cannot evacuate all sectors of our communities and that our current reliance of structures designed a generation ago have failed us. We support a renewed commitment to strong systems of levee's and other structures that together with a robust coastal conservation and restoration effort gives real and lasting protection to the people of south Louisiana

**Plan for the future we expect, not the past.** Plans for our coast and its communities must be rooted in likelihood that we will continue to experience rising seas and, at least for the foreseeable, more frequent and intense storms. Such factors should not only influence the design of levees and structures but the development of land use plans, building codes, and emergency response plans.

**Learn the lessons of Katrina and apply them.** Clearly many things did not work well or to the satisfaction many and we must do more than assign blame for those things, we must learn from them.

**Commit to good planning and conservation.** One lesson is already clear and that is that many of the storms impacts could have been lessened had better conservation and planning been used to guide development over the past 50 years. The areas most prone to flooding were more at risk in part as a result of development practices and engineering decisions that frequently predated many of the laws and programs that have helped reduce wetland loss and set the stage for coastal restoration. We believe is vital to maintain those programs in this time of crisis and planning for the future. While those programs may need to be applied with special sensitivity it is critical to note that we did not get into this situation by being too focused on conservation or too inclusive in our decision making.

In pursuit of these objectives we are actively engaged at all levels of planning a decision making. At this time we believe the most important decision facing us, the State and our Nation is how to make a real commitment to our coast and the protection our communities. We believe this can best be done via the supplemental appropriations process that is currently underway in the wake of Katrina. We believe that it is critical that the emergency response not end with the binding of the wounds of those injured or displaced by the storm but by taking positive steps to ensure that we are building a coast and communities that are truly sustainable. To do less would be to sow the seeds of another disaster and to compound the suffering that we have already experienced.