



## **Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **CONSERVATION GROUPS CALL FOR PRESIDENT TO RELEASE COASTAL PLAN**

BATON ROUGE (January 14, 2004) – Several conservation groups are urging President Bush to revise and release the Draft Comprehensive Coastwide Ecosystem Restoration Study for Coastal Louisiana that has been developed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the State of Louisiana.

Earlier this week, 7 conservation groups signed their approval to a letter requesting that the President act quickly to issue the draft study, implement demonstration projects and develop a cost-effective, prioritized restoration plan. American Rivers, Environmental Defense, the Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana, the Izaak Walton League of America, the National Audubon Society, the National Wildlife Federation and the Natural Resources Defense Council all signed the letter urging the White House "to quickly revise and release this draft plan so that federal and state agencies can continue to work with the public to develop a comprehensive plan that will restore our lost wetlands."

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PLAN

--ADD 1--

The draft plan does not propose a particular course of action but instead provides the information the region and the nation need to develop a comprehensive restoration program for coastal Louisiana. The State of Louisiana and the Army Corps of Engineers presented the plan to the White House in November of 2003 and now must wait on approval or revisions before the plan can be submitted to the public for comment, and then put before Congress for authorization.

Every year Louisiana loses more than 20 square miles of coastal wetlands because sediment that once nourished the Mississippi's coastal delta is now funneled into the Gulf of Mexico by a wall of flood control levees. These wetlands provide habitat for hundreds of species, and also serve as a natural flood protection system for the nation's largest assemblage of oil, gas and port infrastructure as well as the city of New Orleans. Conservation groups argue that failure to reverse the loss of these wetlands would leave America's energy security in serious jeopardy and place millions of Americans at risk of devastating flooding.

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American Rivers \* Environmental Defense \*  
Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana \* Izaak Walton League of America  
National Audubon Society \* National Wildlife Federation  
Natural Resources Defense Council

January 8, 2004

President George W. Bush  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Bush:

We urge you to quickly revise and release the Draft Comprehensive Coastwide Ecosystem Restoration Study for Coastal Louisiana that has been developed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the State of Louisiana.

Over the last 80 years, we have lost 1900 square miles of Mississippi River delta wetlands. Every year, more than 20 square miles of these wetlands are lost from coastal Louisiana – or 90 percent of the coastal wetlands that are lost nationally – because sediment that once renourished the Mississippi's coastal delta is now funneled into the Gulf of Mexico by a wall of flood control levees.

These wetlands provide habitat for hundreds of species, including commercially critical species like shrimp and menhaden. They also serve as a natural flood protection system for the nation's largest assemblage of oil, gas and port infrastructure as well the city of New Orleans. Our failure to reverse the loss of these wetlands would leave America's energy security in serious jeopardy and place millions of Americans at risk of devastating flooding.

Fortunately, the Corps and the State of Louisiana are poised to release a draft plan to restore these wetlands by once again diverting some water and sediment out of the Mississippi and into the river's coastal wetlands and bays.

The draft plan does not propose a particular course of action but instead provides the information the region and the nation need to develop a comprehensive restoration program for coastal Louisiana. We applaud your administration and Louisiana Governor Mike Foster for marshalling these scientific resources to date.

Now, we need your administration to quickly revise and release this draft plan so that federal and state agencies can continue to work with the public to develop a comprehensive plan that will restore our lost wetlands, and that protects the region's homes and infrastructure from flooding. In particular, we urge your administration to:

- Issue the Draft Study – Your Administration should quickly revise and release the draft version of the Comprehensive Coastwide Ecosystem Restoration Study so that public and private interests can work together to develop a restoration plan. Until a draft plan is released, we cannot work with other interest groups to develop an appropriate response to this economic and environmental catastrophe.
- Implement Demonstration Projects – Your Administration should demand that the Corps and the State of Louisiana accelerate efforts to develop a comprehensive plan to restore coastal Louisiana. While some freshwater and sediment diversion projects should be implemented immediately, significant new resources are needed to quickly complete studies on other promising diversion projects and to identify priorities. Scientists should play an even greater role in the management of this selection process.
- Develop a Cost-Effective, Prioritized Restoration Plan -- Any project to restore coastal Louisiana wetlands must be cost-effective, and must ensure that pilot projects that restore significant amounts of lost wetlands and that demonstrate new restoration techniques are built first. But, this restoration project should not be subject to the traditional benefit-cost analysis the Corps applies to traditional civil works projects and multi-purpose projects. Forcing the Corps to reverse agency policy and conduct a costly and time-consuming benefit-cost analysis for a restoration project would waste precious time and resources.

Every 30 minutes, enough delta wetlands to fill a football field are lost. Now is the time for decisive action to save coastal Louisiana’s vanishing wetlands. The release of the draft plan is a critical step towards decisive action.

Sincerely,

Rebecca Wodder  
President  
American Rivers

John Adams  
President  
Natural Resources Defense Council

Fred Krupp  
President  
Environmental Defense

Paul Hansen  
Executive Director  
Izaak Walton League of America

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John Flicker  
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Acting President and CEO  
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