



Louisiana State University  
**Agricultural Center**  
 Louisiana Cooperative Extension Service



**LOUISIANA  
 SEA GRANT**  
 College Program

Knapp Hall  
 Post Office Box 25100  
 Baton Rouge LA 70894-5100  
 504 388-2263

# Louisiana Wetlands News

## 580,000 + Acres Offered For Enrollment In WRP

APRIL 1994

Approximately 5,700 farmers and ranchers in 20 states offered 580,725 acres for enrollment in USDA's Wetland Reserve Program (WRP) in the February sign-up. This represents more than seven times the fiscal year 1994 goal of 75,000 acres and clearly indicates that there is continued strong environmental commitment and responsibility among U.S. farmers.

Over the next several weeks, the U.S. Soil Conservation Service (SCS) and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) will complete preliminary wetland restoration plans for the acreage offered. These plans will serve as the basis for landowners to determine whether to accept ASCS offered payments for enrollment in the program. ASCS offers are expected to be made by May 31.

Landowners in Arkansas, California, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Louisiana, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Nebraska, New York, North Carolina, Oregon, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, Washington and Wisconsin were eligible for the 1994 sign-up. In Louisiana 320 producers offered more than 80,000 acres. Preliminary WRP parish data by number of intentions and intention acres are summarized in the table.

<u>Parish</u>	<u>No. Of Intentions</u>	<u>Intention Acres</u>
Ascension	2	93.9
Awayelles	2	4,216.5
Beauregard	1	250.0
Caddo	1	247.6
Calcasieu	1	250.0
Caldwell	24	5,939.9
Catahoula	32	7,804.3
Concordia	21	5,757.5
Deeoto	1	338.2
East Carroll	9	2,097.4
Evangeline	2	219.9
Franklin	11	2,880.0
Madison	70	20,336.3
Morehouse	8	2,534.4
Natchitoches	5	1,365.7
Ouachita	5	1,275.0
Pointe Coupee	13	6,466.0
Rapides	3	994.7
Red River	2	62.9
Richland	30	6,660.1
St. Landry	34	5,645.9
Tensas	17	4,777.2
West Carroll	7	373.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>320</b>	<b>80,587.2</b>

Under this program USDA pays landowners easement costs for enrolled acreage (fair market value) plus up to 75 percent of the costs associated with the restoration of the site to approved wetland conditions. Enrolled acreage must be restored and kept in a permanent wetland condition in perpetuity under the supervision of ASCS.

USDA hopes to restore up to 1 million acres now in cultivation by the year 2000 in order to conserve soil and improve water and wildlife habitat.



THE LOUISIANA COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE PROVIDES EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IN PROGRAMS AND EMPLOYMENT. LOUISIANA STATE UNIVERSITY AND A. & M. COLLEGE, LOUISIANA PARISH GOVERNING BODIES, SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY, AND UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE COOPERATING

## **Coastal Nonpoint Pollution Control Program. Public Education and Outreach Meetings Set**

The Coastal Zone Act Reauthorization Amendments of 1990 (CZARA) specifically targeted the reduction of coastal nonpoint source pollution caused by the following five sources: 1) agriculture, 2) urban areas, 3) forestry, 4) marinas and 5) hydromodification/wetland projects. Section 6217 of the amendments provide that each state with an approved coastal zone management program (Louisiana has an approved program) must develop and submit to EPA and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) for approval, a Coastal Nonpoint Pollution Control Program (CNPCP) by July 1995. The central purpose of section 6217 is to strengthen the links between federal and state coastal zone management and water quality programs and to enhance state and local efforts to manage land use activities that degrade coastal waters and coastal habitats.

The Louisiana Department of Natural Resources, Coastal Management Division (DNR) is the state's coastal zone management agency and is the lead agency responsible for establishing and implementing this program. DNR is working closely with the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), the Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry (LDAF), the LSU Agricultural Center, the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF), the U. S. Soil Conservation Service (SCS), local government and private industry in the development of a comprehensive Coastal Nonpoint Pollution Control Program for Louisiana as required by CZARA.

Providing for public participation during development and implementation of this program will be critical. To accomplish this goal, four public education meetings have been planned for May. The meetings will be jointly sponsored by the Louisiana Cooperative Extension Service and DNR. Here are the meeting locations and dates.

<u>Date</u>	<u>City</u>	<u>Location</u>
May 4	Lafayette	National Wetlands Research Center
May 5	Thibodaux	Nicholls State University Student Union - Terrebonne Room
May 9	Lake Charles	Burton Coliseum - Chalkley Room
May 11	Kenner	North Kenner Library 630 W. Esplanade Ave.

All meetings will begin at 6 p.m. and end at approximately 8 p.m.

This program may affect areas, and consequently user groups, which are now outside the existing Coastal Zone. Under Section 6217, EPA and NOAA have recommended expanding the existing Louisiana Coastal Zone to include several watersheds that lie north of the current CZA boundary. Additionally, this program will require that "enforceable policies" be identified or developed to insure that all management measures are implemented for the five targeted nonpoint pollution sources (agriculture, forestry, urban areas, marinas and hydromodification/wetland projects). Education programs, therefore, must not only target coastal residents but also reach out to non-coastal residents and landowners that now consider their land use activities as having little if any effect on the Coastal Zone. It will be essential that specific user groups (farmers, landowners, marina users, local government officials, forest industry representatives) as well as the general public attend these important educational meetings.

For more information contact the Louisiana Cooperative Extension Service office in your parish.

## **Public Hearing Set On Proposed DNR Mitigation Rule**

The Louisiana Department of Natural Resources (DNR) will conduct a public hearing on a proposed Coastal Zone Mitigation Rule on April 26, 1994, at 7 p.m. in the DNR Building located on North Fourth Street in Baton Rouge. Under the proposed rule, permitted activities in the coastal zone that cause loss of wetland ecological values would require mitigative actions. Mitigation includes avoiding, minimizing and/or compensating for any impacts caused by permitted activities.

The proposed rule establishes specific procedures for 1) avoiding and minimizing adverse impacts identified in the permit review process, 2) restoring impacted sites when appropriate, 3) quantifying anticipated unavoidable wetland ecological value losses, 4) requiring appropriate and sufficient compensatory mitigation, 5) establishing mitigation banks and 6) evaluating and processing requests for variances from the compensatory mitigation requirement.

In addition to establishing annual base mitigation costs for habitat units that must be replaced within each coastal hydrologic basin, the rule establishes a compensatory mitigation processing fee, a mitigation bank processing fee, a mitigation bank periodic review fee and a compensatory mitigation variance request fee. Collected fees would be used to fund DNR positions and other costs associated with the above proposed rule.

If compensatory mitigation is to be accomplished by a monetary contribution, the payment will be made to the Louisiana Wetlands Conservation and Restoration Fund and utilized to supplement DNR's ongoing effort to create, restore, protect and/or enhance wetlands in the hydrologic basin where the impact has occurred.

In a previous newsletter, the first draft Compensatory Mitigation Processing Fees were outlined. Under the current proposal, however, these fees have been significantly increased.

<u>Acres of Direct Impact</u>	<u>Compensatory Mitigation Processing Fee</u>
0 - 0.4	\$ 400
0.5 - 1.0	800
1.1 - 2.0	1,600
2.1 - 3.0	2,400
3.1 - 4.0	3,200
4.1 - 5.0	4,000
5.1 - 10.0	6,000
10.1 - 15.0	10,000
15.1 - 25.0	16,000
25.1 - 100.0	20,000
> 100.0	30,000

Copies of the proposed rule containing the basin by basin annual base mitigation costs and a schedule of all of the above mentioned fees may be obtained from the Department of Natural Resources, Office of Coastal Restoration and Management, 625 North Fourth Street, 10th Floor, Baton Rouge, LA 70802, phone (504) 342-1375. Interested parties may submit their views orally or in writing at the public meeting or they may mail written inquiries and comments to Rocky Hinds, DNR-CMD, Box 44487, Baton Rouge, LA 70804-4487 by May 2, 1994.

For more information about the proposed Coastal Zone Mitigation Rule contact your local parish Extension Service Office.

## **1994-95 Louisiana Coastal Wetland Restoration Plan**

Louisiana's 1994-95 Coastal Wetlands Conservation and Restoration Plan (fourth year priority list) will be submitted to the Louisiana Legislature during the session that begins April 25. Legislation passed in 1989 created a statutorily dedicated fund (Wetlands Conservation and Restoration Fund) that provides a maximum of \$25 million annually for coastal restoration projects. These funds are primarily derived from oil and gas related severance taxes.

Restoration projects fall into five general categories: 1) freshwater, sediment and nutrient introduction aimed at conserving and creating vegetated wetlands; 2) management of surface water to protect vegetated wetlands from saltwater intrusion and erosion by tidal currents; 3) sedimentation and low-cost shore protection to maintain the integrity of vegetated wetlands; 4) gulf shoreline protection in critical areas (including barrier islands); and 5) evaluation of new restoration technologies that may effectively create and/or protect vegetated wetlands.

This year's proposals will benefit more than 39,000 acres at an estimated cost of \$43 million. Revenues from the state Wetlands Fund are supplemented by federal Coastal Wetlands Planning, Protection and Restoration Act (CWPPRA) funds on a 25 percent state/75 percent federal cost share rate. The federal government has committed \$35 million annually to fund restoration projects in Louisiana.

To obtain a copy of the 1994-95 Coastal Wetlands Conservation and Restoration Plan (which breaks down projects by hydrologic basin) contact Dr. Len Bahr, Executive Assistant, Governor's Office of Coastal Activities, P.O. Box 94004, Baton Rouge, LA 70804 or call my office in Baton Rouge.

## **Annual Workshop on Remote Sensing and Geographic Information Systems for Coastal Management in Louisiana**

The 10th Annual Workshop on Remote Sensing and Geographic Information Systems (GIS) for Coastal Management in Louisiana will be held at the LSU Student Union May 23 to 25. The objectives of the workshop are to 1) present and discuss current research and operational uses of spatial information systems to enhance the management of coastal zone

resources in the Northern Gulf of Mexico and 2) provide a forum for the exchange of information and ideas on this and related topics. Advanced mapping techniques now available through GIS technology have greatly enhanced our ability to monitor coastal land loss rates and document the successes of coastal restoration projects in Louisiana. Landowners and land managers are beginning to utilize GIS technology effectively in developing management decisions throughout Louisiana.

The workshop is sponsored by the National Biological Survey, the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality, the LSU Department of Geography and Anthropology, the National Marine Fisheries Service and the Mid-South Region and Gulf Coast Chapter of the American Society of Photogrammetry and Remote Sensing. Technical presentations and an interactive sessions for poster and vendor exhibits will be included in the workshop agenda.

For additional information contact Bo Blackmon at (504) 266-8691.

### **Bonnet Carre Diversion Project To Receive Further Analysis**

An agreement has been reached among the Environmental Protection Agency, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Louisiana and Mississippi, the Lake Pontchartrain Basin Foundation and the Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana that calls for the establishment of a panel to analyze the Bonnet Carre Freshwater Diversion Project in Southeast Louisiana. This project was approved by the Corps several years ago. However, concerns about water quality impacts on Lake Pontchartrain have delayed final implementation. The recently announced agreement calls for the panel to determine whether the diversion can be utilized to enhance the wetlands surrounding the proposed project (wetlands located along the southwest shore of Lake Pontchartrain) and insure the health of Lake Pontchartrain. The agreement delays the possibility of any construction activities until after May 31.

Each of the groups that participated in developing the agreement to analyze the project will nominate experts to serve on the review panel. The panel will investigate the feasibility of overflowing all or

part of the diverted water through the wetlands in the spillway, as well as the wetlands east and west of the spillway as an alternative to construction of the six mile outfall canal.

Members of the Louisiana Congressional delegation have urged the panel to conduct the analysis in a thorough and timely manner. The panel will formally report their progress on May 31.

### **Status of Fish Tissue Mercury Contamination In Louisiana Waterbodies**

In recent weeks many news articles have reported problems with mercury contamination of certain fish in various waterbodies in Louisiana. The Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals (DHH) has issued a fish consumption advisory on an approximately 100 mile stretch of the Ouachita River in Northeast Louisiana due to mercury levels in some samples exceeding the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) alert level for fish tissue of 1.0 ppm (parts per million). Largemouth bass taken from the Ouachita River from 1989 to 1993 have showed tissue concentrations of mercury ranging from 0.83 to 1.29 ppm. Twelve of the 29 samples taken from 1992-1993 had mercury concentrations > 1.0 ppm.

Preliminary data have indicated there is a strong correlation between low pH and low alkalinity levels in water and high mercury concentrations in fish tissue.

Mercury contamination of fish has been documented worldwide, even in areas removed from obvious man-made sources. Florida has investigated mercury contamination of fish for several years, resulting in a number of advisories at many sites. Arkansas also reports similar high mercury levels in fish tissue and has a number of consumption advisories in effect. Some carnivorous fish, such as bass, can bioaccumulate methylmercury at concentrations that are 1 million to 10 million times the levels found in surrounding waters. Larger (older) bass also have been found to have higher levels of mercury than smaller (younger) fish. This is to be expected due to increased bioaccumulation with age.

Atmospheric deposition from coal fired power plants and trash incineration has been indicated as a possible primary mercury source. Other possible sources include natural deposits of mercury in Arkansas

entering the watershed and leaking natural gas meters in the Monroe Oil and Gas Field.

Mercury occurs naturally or as a result of chemical contamination. Low levels of mercury are found in soils, oceans, lakes and rivers and fish. Since mercury is in nature, people are exposed throughout their lives to low levels of it.

In the affected area of the Ouachita River (Louisiana/Arkansas border to lock at Columbia) a fish consumption advisory issued in August 1992 recommends: 1) no consumption of largemouth bass by pregnant or breastfeeding women, and by children younger than 7; 2) Limiting consumption of other fish species to two meals per month by pregnant or breastfeeding women and by children younger than 7 (a meal is considered to be a half pound of fish for an adult); 3) Limiting consumption of largemouth bass to two meals per month by the general population; 4) Not limiting consumption of other fish species by the general population.

Additionally, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service recommends that no fish or raccoon taken from the Ouachita and D'Arbonne National Wildlife Refuges be eaten because of elevated levels of mercury.

The Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals (DHH) believes that the amounts of mercury found in these fish are well below those that would make you sick. This advisory is issued as a **precaution** because levels are higher than expected. If you have consumed fish (even bass) from these waters, DHH believes that there is no immediate need to be concerned about your health. Pregnant women and children are more sensitive to mercury effects; therefore, lower limits have been set for these groups under the advisory.

Mercury sampling will be conducted by the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) in 12 additional lakes in North Louisiana and two in South Louisiana. As results from these samples are reported, advisory updates will be provided.

For more information about fishing advisories in Louisiana contact the Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals - Environmental Epidemiology Office at (504) 568-8537.

## **European Union (EU) May Prohibit Leghold Trap Harvested Fur Beginning January 1, 1995**

The European Union Trap/Fur Ban may halt the export of certain wild furs into Europe beginning January 1, 1995. The Union passed the fur ban regulation November 1991 after being bombarded by complaints from groups opposed to use of the leghold trap, which is the most effective tool used by Louisiana trappers to capture popular furbearers, such as muskrat and nutria. Strong campaigns by animal rights organizations have targeted restrictions on use of leghold traps and the wearing of fur coats worldwide.

Fur industry experts estimate the European Union market receives approximately 75 percent of U.S. wild fur exports either directly or indirectly.

Without regulated harvests, wildlife managers are concerned that overpopulations may result in increased damage to coastal wetland habitats and increased livestock predator related losses. In south Louisiana many areas with overpopulations of nutria and muskrat exist where vegetation has been completely eaten out. This causes drastic wildlife and fisheries habitat deterioration and increased coastal land loss.

Trapping continues to be a very important natural resource based industry in many rural Louisiana communities, especially in South Louisiana. In an attempt to voice their concern about this proposal, Louisiana trappers have recently held several meetings across the state. They are requesting Congressional and U.S. Trade Representative assistance, hoping to communicate to European Union members the adverse environmental and economic impacts of this action.

## **Barataria-Terrebonne Video Documentary Premiere**

The Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary Program (BTNEP) and the Louisiana Nature and Science Center (LNSC) will sponsor the world premiere screening of a new one-hour video documentary about the land and people of the Barataria-Terrebonne Basins on Friday April 22 at 7 p.m. in the Nunnemaker Auditorium, Monroe Hall, Loyola University in New Orleans. The premiere showing is free and open to the public. The video also will be aired on television on Louisiana Public Broadcasting stations statewide on

Tuesday, May 3 at 7 p.m. The documentary, titled "Haunted Waters, Fragile Lands, Oh, What Tales to Tell," was developed by well-known Louisiana filmmaker Glen Pitre in cooperation with LPB and WYES for the BTNEP and the LNSC with funding from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality and the Louisiana Endowment for the Humanities.

Pitre says, "This is a story of how people change the landscape and water-scape and how the land and water change people. The lifestyle many people think of as Cajun actually represents the contributions of many, varied cultures. If you build a camp on plings, you're following a tradition that came here from the Philippines. When you eat a Louisiana oyster, what you're tasting is part of the region's Croatian legacy."

The hour-long show includes interview clips, wildlife photography, visits to local landmarks famous and little known, as well as archival images that conjure up the region's past. The viewer will experience first-hand how life was lived on sugarcane plantations, in trappers' cabins and on shrimp drying platforms located within the Basins. The research effort for the film, led by LSU Professor Dr. Donald Davis, uncovered movie footage not seen since the 1920s.

For more information about the documentary contact Lynn Woods, BTNEP Education Coordinator and video Executive Producer, at 1-800-259-0869.

### **Teens List Coastal Wetlands Degradation As Top Environmental Issue in Louisiana**

More than 60 teens across Louisiana studying environmental issues affecting Louisiana voted degradation of the state's coastal wetlands as their number one environmental concern. Louisiana is currently losing approximately 16,000 acres of coastal wetlands per year due to subsidence, freshwater flow restrictions, saltwater intrusion, shoreline erosion and relative sea level rise.

Starting with the list of issues from the Louisiana Environmental Action Plan 2000 project, students and leaders met with environmental experts during spring break to learn more about impacts of the many issues affecting Louisiana's natural resource base. After considerable discussion, the issues were ranked

according to their importance to Louisiana.

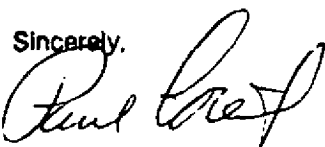
The session was held at Camp Grant Walker, Extension's state 4-H camp near Pollock, with funding support from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Region 6 office in Dallas, Texas. Other supporting agencies included the Louisiana Departments of Environmental Quality (DEQ), Natural Resources (DNR), Health and Hospitals (DHH), Transportation and Development (DOTD), Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF), the Gulf of Mexico Program (GMP) and the Governor's Office of Coastal Activities.

Participants discovered that solving the problems associated with environmental concerns is not easy; however, it became very clear that increased awareness of the public policy development process greatly enhanced the leadership skills of Louisiana's next generation of decision-makers.

### **Other Important Dates to Remember**

- |           |  |
|-----------|--|
| May 10    | Black Bear Critical Habitat Public Meeting, West Monroe, LA  |
| May 11    | Black Bear Critical Habitat Public Meeting, New Iberia, LA   |
| May 26-27 | Lake Pontchartrain Basin Research Symposium Titled, "The Basics of the Basin" University of New Orleans Campus |

For more information about any of the topics discussed in this newsletter or to obtain wetland and coastal resource related education information contact your parish Louisiana Cooperative Extension Service office.

Sincerely,  


Paul Coreil, Area Agent  
(Wetland and Coastal Resources)

Louisiana State University Agricultural Center, H. Rouse Caffey, Chancellor  
Louisiana Cooperative Extension Service, Bruce Flint, Vice Chancellor and Director

Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, Acts of Congress of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the United States Department of Agriculture. The Louisiana Cooperative Extension Service provides equal opportunities in programs and employment.