



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

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# Louisiana Wetlands News

## Wetland Reserve Program (WRP) Video

As reported earlier, Louisiana farmers/landowners have shown great interest in the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Wetlands Reserve Program. In fact, Louisiana has led the nation in two of the three sign-ups held thus far. Interest in Louisiana has heavily outlasted available funding, with many potential participants now waiting to enroll farmland when additional sign-ups are held. In most cases land being enrolled in WRP is marginal farmland often prone to flooding. Most of this land was cleared for agricultural use when commodity prices (primarily soybeans) were at record levels in the 1970s, prices not achieved since.

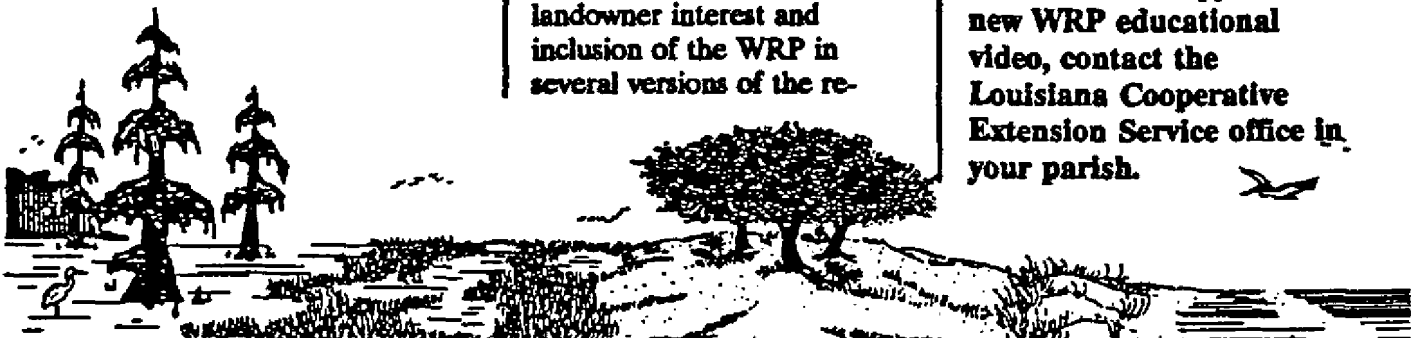
The WRP is a voluntary program that allows

landowners to sell a perpetual easement to the federal government in exchange for the restoration of farmland back to wetlands. The landowner receives agricultural fair market value for the tract, and all restoration costs are also paid by the federal government. A comprehensive land management plan is developed and must be adhered to by the current landowner and all future title holders of the tract. Compatible uses typically held by the landowner include hunting and recreational fishing and timber harvest under a forest management plan approved by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). Clearcutting and future cropping, however, are prohibited.

With continued landowner interest and inclusion of the WRP in several versions of the re-

authorized Farm Bill, a new educational video has been produced by the Louisiana Cooperative Extension Service titled, "Farms to Forests: The Wetlands Reserve Program." Funding for the video project was largely provided by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Region 6 Office in Dallas, Texas. This video was filmed entirely in Louisiana with the help of the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and several county agents statewide. The video briefly describes the goals and specifics of the WRP and should be well received by a variety of audiences including, but not limited to interested landowners or farmers, farm organizations, civic groups and high school students.

For a free copy of this new WRP educational video, contact the Louisiana Cooperative Extension Service office in your parish.



## Louisiana Wetland Plant Producers Association (LWPPA) Conference and Annual Meeting Set

In recent years, the planting of wetland vegetation to help stem coastal erosion has become a very effective wetland restoration-related option in Louisiana. This has led to a budding new industry involved in the production and planting of cultured wetland plants materials coastwide. Currently, at least five known commercial wetland plant producers operate in Louisiana, and their numbers are growing. Additionally, technical support for this new industry is being provided by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), previously known as

the Soil Conservation Service, with the opening of a new wetland Plant Materials Center (PMC) in Golden Meadow, (Lafourche Parish) in 1992. This PMC is developing new varieties of native wetland vegetation for use in coastal restoration projects.

In an effort to improve both the quality and quantity of wetland plants available for wetland restoration projects, the Louisiana Wetland Plant Producers Association (LWPPA) has been officially organized in Louisiana.

To expand interest in wetland restoration involving vegetative plantings, the

LWPPA will sponsor a half-day educational meeting which will jointly serve as the Association's annual meeting for 1996. The meeting is April 16 at the LSU Agricultural Center building (Room 214 Efferson Hall) beginning at 1 p.m. Topics include 1) the growing need for woody vegetative seedings in wetland restoration statewide, 2) new developments in tissue culture, hydro-planting and biotechnology, 3) wetland plant grower certification proposals, 4) certification of Louisiana wetland plant materials, 5) interstate import/export of wetland plant materials and 6) the

The purpose of the Association is:

- 1) To safeguard and advance the economic interests and general welfare of wetland plant producers in Louisiana;
- 2) To develop professional standards related to wetland plant production;
- 3) To promote legislation providing for proper conduct and development of the wetland plant production industry; and
- 4) To enlighten the public with respect to wetland plant production and the need for coastal restoration.

The current LWPPA Board of Directors consists of:

**President** - Jeff Murphy - Lake Charles (ph. 318-762-4242)

**Vice-President** - Daniel Broussard - Abbeville (ph. 318-893-2202)

**Treasurer** - Earl J. Matherne, Sr. - Des Allemands (ph. 504-758-1985)

**Secretary** - Partick J. Murphy - Hackberry (ph. 318-527-6531)

future of wetland vegetative planting projects in Louisiana. Additionally, a short LWPPA annual meeting will be held at the end of the program. Immediately after the annual meeting, the LWPPA will also sponsor a social/crawfish boil at the 4-H mini-farm located across from Parker Coliseum. The registration fee for the meeting and supper will be \$10 for non-members and free for paid-up members.

Two classes of membership in the Association are available: 1) Producer Members (\$100 per year) - This class is open to people/businesses involved in the production, cultivation and sale of plant stock. Producer members must also be state licensed nurserymen and have been active in a commercial nursery business for at least one year before

applying for membership (a statement of business activities must be submitted with membership application). General Members (\$25 per year) - This class is open to anyone interested in promoting wetland restoration through the use vegetative plantings. This includes the study, management, restoration or regulation of wetlands; or any persons involved in other wetland-related activities including, but not limited to, research, education or in a government department, agency or university.

Anyone interested in learning about this exciting new industry and the use of vegetative plantings in coastal/wetland restoration should attend the April 16 annual meeting. Membership dues can also be paid at the meeting. Remember, membership includes free

registration for the meeting and supper.

In order to know how much food to prepare, everyone planning to attend is asked to pre-register no later than April 12. Please notify my office by the deadline if you plan to attend. My address is: P.O. Box 25100, Baton Rouge, LA 70894-5100; FAX No. 504-388-2478).

For more information about the Association or the upcoming annual meeting, please feel free to call any of the board member above, or Paul Coreil, wetland specialist with the LSU Agricultural Center's Louisiana Cooperative Extension Service (ph. 504-388-2266), or Mike Materne, plant materials specialist with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (ph. 504 389-0335).

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## Study of Coastal Landowners' Perceptions Completed

To learn more about coastal landowners' perceptions related to wetland regulatory policy, economic outlook of wetland ownership, and key wetland landowner issues and concerns, a descriptive study was conducted in 1995 by Paul Coreil and funded by the LSU Agricultural Center's Louisiana Cooperative Extension Service using a mailed survey study design. Coastal wetland landowners' perceptions in three Louisiana coastal parishes (Cameron, Terrebonne and St. Bernard) were assessed, and comparisons were made by parish and by land size group (small = 100-500 acres and large = 2500 acres or more). The overall response rate for the study was approximately 60% (n=209).

Study conclusions revealed the following landowner perceptions:

- 1) The federal Section 404 wetland permitting program and the state Coastal Use Permitting program are perceived as less than adequate.
- 2) State assumption of federal wetland permitting is generally supported.

- 3) **The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) (formerly the Soil Conservation Service) is perceived to be the federal agency most receptive toward private landowners' goals and objectives, and the agency landowners feel should be responsible for making wetland determinations and wetland permitting.**
- 4) **When considering landowner-oriented government assistance programs, tax breaks and direct coastal restoration funding are favored over outright government purchase of wetlands.**
- 5) **Coastwide, little income is earned from surface uses (hunting, fishing, trapping, eco-tourism, farming and ranching, etc.) of coastal wetlands.**
- 6) **Coastal landowners plan to maintain ownership of their wetlands in the future.**
- 7) **The overall quality of coastal wetlands is perceived to be somewhat poor.**
- 8) **Landowners support the location of a refuge both in the parish where wetlands are owned and adjacent to their wetlands.**
- 9) **Current wetland regulatory policy in the U.S. is perceived to be approaching a "takings" under the 5th Amendment of the Constitution.**
- 10) **The two most important issues facing private coastal landowners are (1) private property rights and (2) coastal erosion.**

**Based on the findings outlined above, the following recommendations were made:**

1. **Federal and state wetland regulatory programs should be modified to address the less than adequate perceptions held by Louisiana coastal landowners.**
2. **The federal Section 404 wetland permitting program should be assumed by the state of Louisiana.**
3. **NRCS should be designated as the primary federal agency responsible for making wetland determinations on private coastal wetlands.**
4. **Future coastal landowner-oriented government assistance programs should focus on providing (1) tax breaks and (2) provision of direct wetland restoration funding.**
5. **An increased educational focus should be directed toward the implementation of non-consumptive tourism-related business enterprises.**
6. **Local government revenue-raising options that are not directly linked to surface use values of coastal wetlands should be considered.**
7. **Wetland policy in Louisiana should directly address concerns associated with the loss of private property rights and coastal erosion.**

**Anyone wanting to receive a more detailed summary of this study should contact my office in Baton Rouge.**

## Freshwater Diversion Projects Along the Mississippi River

Freshwater diversion projects have been and will continue to be an important part of the restoration of Louisiana's eroding coast. Before the leveeing of the Mississippi River, much of Louisiana's coastal marshes were built by sediment-rich deposits from a then free-flowing river. After several very damaging floods in the late 1800s and early 1900s, the River was leveed and largely controlled by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Many scientists believe true restoration of the coast can take place (especially in southeast Louisiana) only through controlled sediment and freshwater diversion projects that mimic the land building processes of the Mississippi River that have occurred over the past 10,000 years. Although effective, diversion projects can change marsh salinities and displace saltwater finfish and shellfish. The alternative, however, may be reduced fisheries habitat and reduced fisheries productivity in the future. The long-term goal, therefore, is stable coastal wetland habitats and sustainable fisheries and wildlife productivity - a goal that will require direct actions such as sediment/freshwater diversion projects which will lead to some changes.

Many people often ask how many freshwater diversion projects are currently operating along the lower Mississippi River. Below is a list of both operating projects and uncompleted approved projects:

### Operating projects:

- Freshwater siphon at West Pointe a la Hache (maximum discharge rate of 2,144 cubic feet per second (cfs)); Operated by the Plaquemines Parish Government
- Freshwater siphon at LaReussite (maximum discharge rate of 2,150 cfs); Operated by the Plaquemines Parish Government

- Freshwater siphon at White's Ditch (maximum discharge rate of 250 cfs); Operated by the Plaquemines Parish Government
- Freshwater siphon at Violet (maximum discharge rate of 500 cfs); Operated by the St. Bernard Parish Government
- Bayou Lamoque freshwater diversion structure (maximum discharge rate - structure # 1 = 4,000 cfs; structure # 2 = 8,000 cfs); Operated by the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries
- Caernarvon freshwater diversion structure (maximum discharge rate of 8,000 cfs); Operated by the Louisiana Department of Natural Resources (DNR)

### Uncompleted approved projects:

- Davis Pond freshwater diversion structure (maximum discharge rate of 10,500 cfs); Operated by DNR
- Bonnet Carre freshwater diversion project (maximum discharge rate of 30,000 cfs); Operated by DNR

Within the last two years there have been preliminary discussions concerning the possible re-opening of the Mississippi River into Bayou Lafourche for both freshwater introduction into deteriorating wetlands and increased freshwater drinking water availability. This proposal is being investigated, and a final decision has not been made.

## 1996 National Biological Service Training Workshops

The National Biological Service and the U.S. Geological Survey of the Department of Interior are presenting a series of workshops pertaining to habitat mapping, photo-interpretation, remote sensing and Geographical Information Systems (GIS). The workshops are part of an effort to exchange information and provide access to technologies developed at the Southern Science Center (formerly the National Wetlands Research Center) for enhancement of natural resource surveying. The workshops are available to the general public, educators, local government officials, and state and federal agencies.

Most of the workshops will last three days. No previous experience in any of the topics listed above will be required. Appropriate handouts, photos, maps and other forms of needed materials will be provided to participants.

Here are workshops planned for 1996:

- March 5-7 Introduction to the Federal Geographic Data Committee's (FGDC's) Mapping/GIS Standards (Southern Science Center, Lafayette)
- May 21-22 Introduction to National Wetlands Classification System (Wharton Hall, USL, Lafayette)
- June 8-9 Introduction to Field Identification of Wetland Forest Trees (Wharton Hall, USL, Lafayette)
- July 16-18 Introduction to the Global Positioning System (GPS) for Natural Resources Assessment & Survey (Wharton Hall, USL, Lafayette)
- August 14-16 Introduction to Desktop Geographic Information System (GIS) for Natural Resources (Southern Science Center, Lafayette)
- September 10-12 Statistical Analysis System (SAS) Fundamentals for Biological Sciences (Southern Science Center, Lafayette)
- October 23-25 Introduction to Wetland Remote Sensing and Mapping (Wharton Hall, USL, Lafayette)
- October 28-30 Advanced Wetland Photo-interpretation (Wharton Hall, USL, Lafayette)
- November 5-7 Introduction to GIS for Natural Resources (Southern Science Center, Lafayette)
- December 4-6 Introduction to Desktop GIS for Natural Resources (Southern Science Center, Lafayette)

Anyone interested in participating in any of the above workshops should contact Pat O'Neil at the NBS Southern Science Center in Lafayette by calling (318) 266 - 8699 or FAX (318) 266 - 8500.

## Wetland Training Workshops/Courses Offered by LSU

Because of continued high interest, the LSU Wetland Biogeochemistry Institute will again offer a Wetland Delineation Training Workshop, May 6-10. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is now shifting much of its wetland delineation duties to the private sector through the establishment of a soon-to-be established Certified Wetland Delineator Program. To become a Certified Wetland Delineator, a person will have to have successfully completed a 1987 Corps of Engineers Wetland Delineation Manual training workshop in addition to successfully mastering a COE written and field test.

Two new wetland-related courses that may be of interest to natural resource professionals are also offered by the Wetland Institute in 1996. A Wetland Plant Identification Course will be offered July 15-18, and a Hydric Soils Identification Course will be offered May 13-15.

Anyone interested in getting more information about the above workshop/courses can contact my office in Baton Rouge or call Karen Gros at the LSU Wetlands Institute at (504) 388 - 8806.

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## Coastal Nonpoint Pollution Control Program Update

In mid-November, the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) jointly submitted the Coastal Nonpoint Pollution Control Program (CNPCP) review document to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). At this time, NOAA and EPA are reviewing the proposed document for conditional approval.

Some of the key elements of the submitted document include:

**BOUNDARY** - The submitted state plan recommends that the existing state coastal zone boundary be used for the CNPCP.

**PRACTICES** - Specific Best Management Practices (BMPs) for agriculture have not been agreed upon. The matching of BMPs to Coastal Zone Act Re-authorization Amendment management measures must be completed later.

**IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY** - Specific goals/milestones/timelines that delineate a structured approach to implementation of the program in coastal Louisiana have not been completed by the CNPCP subcommittee.

**ENFORCEABLE MECHANISMS** - Originally, EPA and NOAA guidance required that states include back-up

enforcement provisions assure that BMPs were implemented. Enforceable mechanisms, however, were not included in the document submitted. Voluntary approaches were recommended.

**MEMORANDA OF AGREEMENT** - All draft MOAs with state agencies and institutions participating in the CNPCP implementation were excluded from the document.

**FORESTRY EXCLUSION** - The document recommended an exclusion for forestry from the CNPCP provisions.

**CLEAN WATER ACT RE-**

**AUTHORIZATION** - Several CWA re-authorization bills have been introduced in Congress. Those that consolidate nonpoint pollution programs under Section 319 of the Act, allow them to remain voluntary and delegate them to the states seem to have the most support. No final agreement on CWA re-authorization, however, has been reached.

For more information about Louisiana CNPCP or to obtain a copy of Louisiana's document submitted to NOAA and EPA, contact the Louisiana Department of Natural Resources at (504) 342 - 7591.

## **Environmental State of the State Conference Set for June**

The first Environmental State of the State Conference, sponsored by the Environmental Research Consortium of Louisiana (ERCLA), is set for June 7-8, on the LSU Campus in Baton Rouge. Currently, the eight members of the Consortium include Freeport-McMoRan Audubon Species Survival Center, LSU Medical Center's Stanley S. Scott Cancer Center, The Nature Conservancy of Louisiana, LSU Institute for Recyclable Materials, Audubon Institute Office of Environmental Policy, Loyola University Environmental Communications, Freeport-McMoRan Center for Environmental Modeling at UNO and Tulane/Xavier Center for Bioenvironmental Research. The goal of the conference sponsors is to improve the environment of Louisiana through further knowledge, understanding and conservation.

Topic sessions and scheduled speakers include:

- Coastal Erosion - Dr. Denise Reed, Associate Professor, LA Universities Marine Consortium
- Property Rights - Dr. Paul Coreil, Associate Specialist (Wetlands), LSU Agricultural Center's Louisiana Cooperative Extension Service
- Water Quality - Dr. Nancy Rabalais, Associate Professor, LA Universities Marine Consortium
- Air Quality - Dr. Michael D. McDaniel, Vice-President & Operations Manager, Woodward-Clyde Associates

Speakers for each topic session will give a multi-perspective overview of each issue, and panels of recognized experts will participate in panel discussions after each overview presentation. Questions from the audience will also be allowed. Posters and exhibits are also requested.

For more information about the conference, contact Sarah Jones, ESOS Conference, P.O. Box 4327, New Orleans, LA 70178-4327 (phone - 504-565-3822).

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For more information about any topic discussed in this newsletter, or to obtain wetland or coastal resource-related educational information, contact your parish Louisiana Cooperative Extension Service office.

Sincerely,



Paul Coriel  
Associate Specialist (Wetlands)