



# Louisiana Wetlands News

June

1998

## Farmers Reducing Pesticide Use

The International Federation of Agricultural Producers (IFAP) recently released study results showing that environmental risk in the United States has been reduced by 66% since 1987 due to reduced pesticide use. This trend seems to be worldwide with Swedish farmers reducing pesticide use by 70% since 1985, and German farmers reducing pesticide use by more than 50% since 1990. Technology allowing for reduced pesticide use without sacrificing crop yields has no doubt resulted in large part due to publically funded research and Extension efforts conducted by Land Grant Colleges nationwide. Our own Louisiana State University (LSU Agricultural Center) has no doubt been a major contributor to this effort.

### *Directories available by request*

#### Wetland Delineators Directory

A Directory of Wetland Delineators Covering Louisiana compiled by the Louisiana Cooperative Extension Service, and the LSU Wetland Biogeochemistry Institute, is now available upon request. The directory was developed to provide landowners, developers, financial institutions and business owners with wetland delineation assistance on private lands throughout the state.

For a copy of the directory, call LCES at (504) 388-2266.

#### Coastal Louisiana Water Quality Agency Contact Directory

With assistance from the Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary Program (BTNEP), the LSU Agricultural Center - LCES recently published a Coastal Louisiana Water Quality Agency Contact Directory. The directory contains key state and federal agency water quality agency contacts with responsibility for a variety of pollutants such as bacteria diversions, ecosystem management, fisheries, general water quality information, groundwater, nutrients, oil and gas permits/impacts, pesticides, sediments and toxins.

For a free copy of the draft directory, contact LCES at (504) 388-2266.



## **NWP 29 Suspended by Federal Judge in Alaska**

John A. Sedwick, Judge of the U.S. District Court, Alaska District last week suspended, on procedural grounds, the operation of Nationwide Permit (NWP) 29, which allows construction of single family homes under the Section 404 Federal wetlands permitting program. Under the court's order in Alaska Center for the Environment v. West (Case No. A96-245 CV (JWS) (D. Alaska, April 30, 1998), NWP 29 is suspended until the Corps adequately addresses alternatives to the current permit, including permit, including excluding high-value waters from the permit, and imposing an acreage limit lower than the current ½ acre.

NWP 29 was issued in July 1995, and reissued along with 38 other NWPs, on December 13, 1996. NWP 29 authorizes, without the need for an individual permit from the Corps, discharges of dredged or fill material into non-tidal waters, including wetlands, for the construction or expansion of single family homes. Certain criteria must be met by the applicant to qualify for the permit, including: limiting the loss of waters affected by the discharge to ½ acre; providing pre-construction notification to the Corps; minimizing impacts; and maintaining vegetated buffers between the fill and the waters.

In July, 1996, a group of environmental organizations challenged the Corps' issuance of NWP 29 on a number of grounds, among them that issuance of the permit violated the Clean Water Act, the Endangered Species Act, and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

The court found that the Corps failed to adequately discuss certain alternatives to the issuance of NWP 29 in its current form: namely, the exclusion from the permit of high quality waters, and reducing the ½ acre ceiling on the permit. As a result, the court decided that the Corps had violated its mandate under NEPA to consider alternatives to the issuance of the Federal permit. The court issued an order enjoining the operation of NWP 29 until the alternatives are adequately addressed by the Corps.

According to Corps officials, the Corps will likely address the alternatives noted in the court's ruling at the same time it releases its package of activity-specific nationwide permits to replace NWP 26, which is expected to be in the near future.

The court's decision calls further attention to the Federal wetlands regulatory program which is already burdened by a number of recent judicial challenges and decisions.

Source: Law Firm of Van Ness Feldman, (National Wetlands Coalition), Washington, D.C.

## Davis Pond Update

Work recently began in Louisiana to divert 2% of the Mississippi River's flow into Barataria Bay to preserve 33,000 acres of sediment-starved marsh. The diversion is one segment of a multi-faceted program designed to put a brake on coastal wetland loss in Louisiana. The infusion of sediment-laden freshwater will decrease salinity in the estuary, replenish the sinking marsh floor, and facilitate the reestablishment of freshwater vegetation.

The project which will ultimately aid 800,000 acres of marsh and bays between St. Charles Parish and the Gulf of Mexico, was authorized by Congress more than three decades ago. Relocating pipelines and oyster leases led to delays, and resource managers ultimately moved the project 25 miles downriver. The project will include a 535 foot long by 85 foot underwater channel which will draw water from the Mississippi River through a control structure and into a series of 14 foot by 14 foot box culverts. From there the water will course through a man-made channel beneath two roads to a pump station and a 9,200-acre ponding area. Weirs will control flow from the ponding area into surrounding wetlands on a path to Lake Salvadore, Lake Cataouache, and eventually into and through Barataria Bay. Highest flows through the diversion project will normally occur during the January-May period, imitating the river's natural hydrological cycle.

Davis Pond Diversion is scheduled to start flowing in the year 2000 but a great deal of monitoring work will take place before the project begins operating. Currently the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

is collecting water quality and sediment data in the area, and the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries began collecting biological data in January 1998. Collecting baseline data prior to diverting the water will allow biologists and engineers to monitor how well the project is working. Intensive monitoring will continue for four years after the project becomes operational. Biological monitoring will include collecting data on fish and shellfish populations in the area and their location, numbers of waterfowl and alligators and their distribution, the effects on marsh plants by herbivores such as nutria, concentrations of pollutants in fish, shellfish and bald eagle chicks, and salinity distribution within the estuary. Water quality parameters such as dissolved oxygen, pH, nitrogen, phosphorus, organic carbon, clarity, metals, oxygen demand, sediments, and certain pollutants will be monitored.

Construction costs are estimated to be \$81,000,000 with projected annual benefits of \$14,997,000 to fish and wildlife and \$298,000 to recreation. Although construction of this project represents a major step, Governor Mike Foster has stated that the risk of no action represents a great risk to the state's natural resources. At a kickoff press conference for National Wetlands Month on May 1 in Baton Rouge, he stated that "Louisiana needs to spend whatever time necessary to protect the state's precious wetland resources." Governor Foster is an avid outdoorsman and urged rededicated efforts from all of those involved in solving Louisiana's coastal wetland loss problem.

Source: The LMRCC Newsletter

## **Wetland Reserve Program (WRP) Update**

Currently Louisiana has over 100,000 acres enrolled in the program for a total cost of 63 million dollars. Additionally, the President's Clean Water Action Plan calls for 100,000 acres of gained wetlands. WRP can significantly contribute to this goal. The National Program Manager is pushing to re-authorize

WRP since it now expires in the year 2002. The 975,000 acre threshold will be reached by 2000. Re-authorization language includes a recommendation for enrollment of 250,000 acres per year for the next ten years.

Congress, however, is debating WRP re-authorization language at a lower acreage level than the 250,000 acres per year outlined above.



## **WRP Help Restore Private Wetlands**

The Wetland Reserve Program (WRP), operated by the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is readily available to help restore wetland functions and values on non-federal lands. Private landowners and state, county and local governments can get the cost share funds to pay 75% of the restoration costs by simply agreeing to maintain the restoration for at least 10 years.

Any request for cost-share funds to restore substantial wetland functions and values at a reasonable cost under a 10 year WRP agreement to maintain them will be considered. With no long-term requirements to maintain the restoration, land rights payments are not available under this WRP option. The agreement is with the USDA and will not be recorded at the courthouse. WRP restorations can not be used to help meet any wetland mitigation requirements or for the development of mitigation banks.

Permanent and 30 year easements also are available, however, top priority is given to offers involving partnerships with other agencies, organization or programs.

Detailed WRP information "on-line" can be found at <http://www.fb-net.org/wrp.htm>

To signup, contact NRCS or your area Soil and Water Conservation District office.

Source: USDA Newsletter

## Emergency Aid Funds Fisheries Projects

In the aftermath of a series of hurricanes and floods, the U.S. Secretary of Commerce declared a fishery resource disaster in the Gulf of Mexico in 1995. Emergency aid totaling \$15 million was made available, \$5 million of which was used to compensate fishermen for uninsured losses. The rest of the money was allocated to fisheries resource agencies of the five impacted Gulf states to alleviate effects of disasters on fisheries and their habitats. The Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries was granted \$5 million to conduct disaster projects during the next three years.

The first project aims to improve the accuracy of landings data used to make harvest recommendations. The Department will administer a logbook and trip ticket program allowing for collection of more accurate information on where, when and why people are fishing commercially and what they are catching. Associated with this project is an effort to measure effects of low oxygen conditions on fishing activity.

A second project is designed to operate a network of six continuous real-time hydrographic data recorders located in the coastal zone from South Calcasieu Lake to The Rigolet's in eastern Louisiana. In cooperation with the U.S. geological Survey, data on water temperature, tide level and salinity will be collected and transmitted via satellite in near real-time. One planned site will be located at the Department's newest

nearshore artificial reef, seven miles south of Barataria Bay. Wind speed and direction, barometric pressure and wave height will also be monitored.

Once all recorders are on line, data will be available to fishermen and management agencies through the Internet. Weekly summary reports will also be available to LDWF Information and Education Division and the Louisiana State University Cooperative Extension Service fisheries agents.

In a third project, LDWF will collaborate with the Louisiana Department of Natural Resources to remove storm related underwater obstructions. This study will explore cost-effective methods of removing obstructions so that available funds can be expended most efficiently in the future.

Water hyacinth, salvinia, and hydrilla control is the focus of the fourth project. Federal funds will be used to treat an estimated 14,000 acres of coastal canals and bayous, improving fishing opportunities by removing nuisance vegetation from favored fishing spots.

**EDITORS:** For more information, contact Claude Boudreaux at telephone: (504) 765-2935 or e-mail: [boudreaux\\_cj@wlf.state.la.us](mailto:boudreaux_cj@wlf.state.la.us)

Source: LDWF New Release

## **Environmental Protection Agency Publications Announcement**

The Environmental Protection Agency recently announced the availability of over 6,000 EPA publications on the Internet. From the National Environmental Publication Information Site (NEPI), interested parties can now search and view full image scanned publications and OCR text from the EPA public access server at: <http://www.epa.gov/cincl>

Users can perform full text searches and display ranked results with their Internet Browser. For information on using the system, click on the hypertext link "About the Search Engine."

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## **Sea Grant Exotic Species Website**

Anyone requiring science-based information on zebra mussels and other nonindigenous species can now obtain it through the touch of their fingertips thanks to the Great Lakes Sea Grant Network. The Sea Grant Zebra Mussel and Nonindigenous Species World Wide Web site contains a comprehensive collection of research publications and education materials produced by Sea Grant programs across the country. The site can be accessed through the World Wide Web, Telnet, or directly through a modem. The Internet address is <http://www.ansc.purdue.edu/sgnis/> A CD-ROM version will soon be available for those users who do not have Internet access. The site provides links to the National Geographic Information System, the Great Lakes Information Network, as well as to nonindigenous species homepages of individual Sea Grant programs. The site is useful for industrial and municipal water users, shoreland property owners, boaters, resource management agencies, students, teachers, outreach professionals, and researchers. Much of the information currently available is related to the zebra mussel, which is a potentially serious threat to freshwater systems in the Gulf of Mexico region. Information on other exotic species is being added regularly.

## **Move to Burlington Resources**

Effective July 1, 1998, I will be leaving the LSU Agricultural Center's Louisiana Cooperative Extension Service (LCES) to assume the position of Wetlands Conservation Administrator for Burlington Resources (formally The Louisiana Land and Exploration Company (L,L&E)).

Over the past 7 years, I have thoroughly enjoyed working with everyone involved in wetland and coastal resource-related issues throughout Louisiana. Effective wetlands/coastal policy will only result when landowners, resource user groups, government, and the public work together. In the position of wetland and coastal resources specialist, I have attempted to facilitate cooperation and find common grounds through education. Hopefully, I was successful more often than not.

The announcement for my vacant position has already been released, and the deadline for accepting applications is July 1, 1998. Hopefully, the new Extension Service wetlands and coastal resources specialist will be selected by mid-July and begin work in early August 1998. I plan to assist in the transition in any way that I can to guarantee continued educational programming in this vital subject matter area.

I would like to thank everyone who supported me over the last seven years. I expect to see many of you in the future as I work to meet the challenges associated with my new position at Burlington Resources.

Sincerely,

Paul Coreil, Associate Specialist  
(Wetlands and Coastal Resources)

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

Visit our website at: <http://www.agctr.lsu.edu/wwwac>

Louisiana State University Agricultural Center, William B. Richardson, Chancellor  
Louisiana Cooperative Extension Service, Jack Bagent, Vice Chancellor and Director

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