



Louisiana Wetland News

Fall 2001

Governor Foster Declares "Jihad" on Coastal Land Loss

More than 375 people met in Baton Rouge at the Pennington Biomedical Research Center on August 15th for "Coastal Summit 2001", a public forum sponsored by the Governor's Office of Coastal Activities. The purpose of the meeting was to engage Louisiana's citizens and industry in a national effort to focus attention on the crisis of coastal land loss in Louisiana. In a keynote address, Governor Mike Foster called for a "Jihad", a holy war that would garner the national support needed to implement the \$14 billion federal-state Coast 2050 plan to restore Louisiana's rapidly eroding coastline.

Foster indicated that congressional passage of the Conservation and Reinvestment Act (CARA), could provide much of the financing for Coast 2050 restoration projects. The CARA bill calls for return of a portion of federal revenues derived from outer continental shelf oil and gas production. If approved, CARA would provide more than \$100 million a year to Louisiana for a variety of purposes, ranging from coastal impact assistance to fisheries and wildlife protection.

The first version of CARA passed the US House of Representatives in the summer of 2000 by a 2/3 majority, but was stalled in the Senate Energy Committee. A new version of the CARA bill was reintroduced earlier this year. Governor Foster told summit attendees that he plans to use his upcoming term as chairman of the Southern Governors Association to push for CARA and coastal restoration as a national priority.

Also featured at the summit were prominent members of Louisiana's coastal industry. Whitney Holding Corp. President R. King Milling addressed the financial problems associated with coastal erosion, stating that, "...such losses will affect more than Louisiana, the federal government will see tax dollars lost along with land, and the infrastructure used by the oil and gas industry will be threatened."

The economic consequences of coastal land loss were echoed by Ted Falgout, director of the Port Fourchon

Commission. Falgout pointed out that the 20 ports along Louisiana's coast represent \$395 million in tax revenue and 229,871 jobs, or one of every eight jobs in the state.

Jim Tripp, a spokesman for Environmental Defense, a national organization, cautioned summit attendees that any national campaign program must first address Louisiana's reputation poor environmental stewards. Col. Thomas Julich, chief engineer for the corps' New Orleans district, characterized the loss of Louisiana's wetlands as "the nation's most significant environmental issue."

Terry Ryder, Foster's executive counsel, convened the summit by stating that in late August the governor would be appointing a task force of industry leaders to develop a political and business strategy to help the state get approval for and manage large restoration programs. A similar group formed in Florida during the early 1990s is widely credited for building the political support which resulted in last year's \$7.8 billion federal appropriation to restore the Everglades.

(Source: Mark Schleifstein, Times Picayune, 8/16/01)



Waging a "holy war" on coastal land loss will be expensive. The Conservation and Reinvestment Act (CARA) could supply some of the necessary funding by redirecting federal revenues derived from oil and gas production off Louisiana's coast.



Combust-Stenholm Bill Passes House Ag. Committee: WRP Concerns Loom

The Agricultural Act of 2001 (H.R. 2646) passed through US House of Representatives Agriculture Committee on July 27, 2001. The 10-year, \$73.5 billion farm bill proposal, drafted by Agriculture Committee Chairman Larry Combust (R-Texas) and ranking member Charlie Stenholm (D-Texas), enlarges participation for soil and water conservation programs by 75 percent over current baseline spending.

The conservation section devotes \$16.511 billion over 10 years to soil, water and wildlife programs, including:

Reauthorizing the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) through 2011 with a 40-million-acre enrollment cap.

Reauthorizing the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) through 2011 at \$1.2 billion annual program level, with livestock producers receiving 50% of annual funding.

Creating an additional \$675 million fund within EQIP to address ground water conservation issues, including cost share for more efficient irrigation systems.

Reauthorizing the Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) through 2011 and providing for an additional 150,000 acres to be enrolled per year.

Reauthorizing the Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP) to provide cost share for landowners to enhance wildlife habitat at a program level of \$25 million annually.

Reauthorizing the Farmland Protection Program (FPP) at a program level of \$50 million annually.

Authorizing a 2 million acre Grassland Reserve Program .

Providing up to \$100 million per year to provide conservation technical assistance to producers using any governmental, or private contractors.

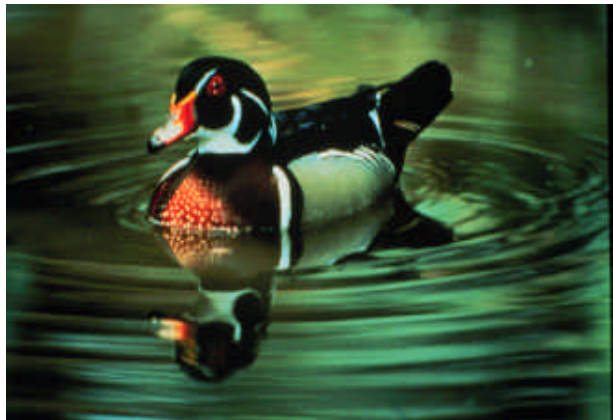
Providing \$150 million to fund the Small Watershed Dam Restoration Program.

Combining the Forestry Incentive Program (FIP) and the Stewardship Incentive Program (SIP) and funding at \$15 million per year.

Though most conservation programs fared better than anticipated, funding for the Wetland Reserve Program remains a concern. The bill adds only 150,000 acres per year to WRP, a quota that could easily be met within a few years considering the backlog of current demand. Conservation organizations argue that H.R. 2646 also alters historical WRP provisions pertaining to: the priority for permanent easements; the prohibition against pesticide application; the requirement of U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service involvement; and linking of farm program eligibility to wetland conservation under Swampbuster.

An additional concern surrounding the bill is the \$100 million proposed limit to conservation technical assistance funding. The cap could severely hamper the ability of agencies and third parties to deliver the research, education and technical assistance that are critical to the proper functioning of farm programs. Furthermore, there is some concern over a proposed shift in conservation program administration. Under H.R. 2646, the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) and Farm Service Agency (FSA) could be merged, or see a realignment of conservation program authority. Opponents of this initiative point out that such a merger or re-alignment is inconsistent with the missions of each agency and could compromise their ability to provide appropriate technical assistance.

H.R. 2646 will be taken up by the full House after the summer recess and completion of the appropriation bills. For daily updates and additional details on these and other conservation issues associated with Farm Bill legislation, check out the Farm Bill Network, at: <http://www.fb-net.org/> or contact local NRCS office.



The Agricultural Act of 2001 (H.R. 2646) proposes more than \$16.5 billion in conservation spending over the next decade. However, the current bill includes controversial alterations to the successful Wetland Reserve Program with only modest increases in authorized program acreage.





LSU AgCenter to Host Farm Policy Meeting

On October 4, 2001, the LSU Department of Agricultural Economics and Agribusiness of the LSU Agricultural Center and will sponsor "Louisiana Agricultural Policy and the

2002 Farm Bill", a 1-day symposium to address current farm problems and the challenges facing U.S. agriculture in the new millennium.

The 2002 Farm Bill alternatives will be discussed as solutions to depressed crop prices, rising production costs, and barriers to international trade. Louisiana Agricultural Policy Forum will provide input into the policy process for agricultural producers, agricultural leaders, lenders, agribusiness representatives, environmental and natural resource stakeholders, and community leaders.

The forum will provide direct input into the legislative process. Priorities and suggestions will be forwarded to the Louisiana Congressional Delegation and the Senate and House Agricultural Committees. Additional information and a registration form for the meeting is available on-line at:

<http://www.agctr.lsu.edu/subjects/farmbill/objective.htm>.

Registration is \$20, payable to: "La. Agricultural Policy and the 2002 Farm Bill". Please send registration form and check to Ms. Terri Bell, LSU AgCenter, P.O. Box 25100, Baton Rouge, La 70894-5100. For more information contact Ms. Carrie Borel at (225)578-2544 or cborel@agctr.lsu



Louisiana Coastal Wetlands Workshops: Barataria Basin and Chenier Plain

The Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana will host two Louisiana Coastal Wetlands Workshops in the Fall of 2001. The Barataria Basin workshop, focusing on barrier islands, will be held October 6 at Grand Isle in southeast Louisiana. The Chenier Plain workshop, focusing on the gulf shoreline and adjacent marsh, will take place on October 27 at Grand Chenier in the southwestern part of the state.

Both workshops will take participants by boat and bus to see what's currently being done to restore wetlands and coastal shorelines. The workshops are open to all interested adults.

Participants must register. Space is limited, so early registration is recommended. The registration fee of \$50 for each workshop includes a boat and land tour, speaker presentations, afternoon discussion, lunch, coffee and snacks.

Field trips depend on weather and boat availability. Substitutions will be made in case of inclement weather.

For more information, call toll free: Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana 1-888-522-6278 (1-888 LACOST) or visit the Coalition website www.crcl.org

For more information on these workshops, go to: <http://www.crcl.org/background/press.html>



On October 6, 2001, the Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana (CRCL) will sponsor a wetland workshop on Grand Isle, La. The workshop will focus on barrier islands, the Barataria Basin, and historical sites such as Fort Livingston .



The alligators of Rockefeller Refuge will be on the agenda for a second wetland workshop sponsored by the CRCL at Grand Chenier, La on October 27, 2001.



Success of New “Coastal Roots” program Aids Marsh Maneuvers

In 1999, Dr. Pam Borne-Blanchard of the Louisiana Sea Grant College Program initiated the “Coastal Roots” Seedling Nursery Program for junior high and high schools in coastal Louisiana. The overall goal of the Coastal Roots Seedling Nursery Program is to assist students in developing an attitude of stewardship toward our natural resources and to provide for them a constructive active learning situation in which they can explore strategies for sustaining our coastal ecosystems.

Specific objectives of the program include: 1) providing junior high and high school students with background information on wetlands issues, focusing on wetland loss as well as wetland restoration and conservation; 2) constructing nurseries on school grounds where students grow native Louisiana wetland plants (southern bald cypress, southern wax myrtle and black mangrove); and 3) Producing wetland plants that can be used by the students in a hands-on restoration program.

With help from with David Bourgeois (LSU AgCenter and La Sea Grant Marine Advisory Agent) and Dr. Ed Bush (LSU Horticulture professor), the Coastal Roots program has been instituted at schools in 9 parishes across coastal Louisiana. These nurseries are funded by three primary sources: the Louisiana Sea Grant College Program, the Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary Program, and the Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana through funding from the NOAA Restoration Center’s Community-Based Restoration Program. Coastal Roots was also recently selected to receive additional funding under the Coastal Impact Assistance Program administered through the Louisiana Department of Natural Resources.



High school students in nine coastal parishes have established “Coastal Roots” seedling nursery programs in which black mangrove, wax myrtle, and bald cypress seedlings are grown for coastal restoration projects.



Coastal Roots nurseries provided seedlings for the vegetative restoration project at four separate Marsh Maneuvers camps held this summer on Grand Terre Island.

Just 2 years after getting started, Coastal Roots nurseries have already been able to lend a helping hand to another student-based stewardship initiative. Students attending the Marsh Maneuvers Coastal Education Program this summer on Grande Terre Island were faced with a shortage of native seedlings for their vegetative restoration project. Two Coastal Roots nurseries, the Larose-Cutoff Junior High and Central Lafourche High School, provided numerous wax myrtle and black mangrove seedlings for the Marsh Maneuvers campers to plant. The interaction of Coastal Roots and Marsh Maneuvers is a positive example of how the environmental stewardship initiatives can work collaboratively towards common goals. Congratulations to the Coastal Roots team of staff and students for their hard work and concern for coastal Louisiana.



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Thank you,

Rex Caffey

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