LSU AgCenter Research & Extension

Sea Grant Louisiana

Louisiana Wetland News

Summer 2005

The Presidents' Forum on Meeting Coastal Challenges:

Towards a Near-Term Agenda for Coastal Louisiana

As Louisiana continues to pursue long-term coastal restoration goals, it is only fitting that its universities take a lead role in addressing the politically-sensitive and economically-challenging issues that face coastal residents today. With that objective in mind, the LSU Agricultural Center, Louisiana Sea Grant, and the LSU Systems Office have embarked on an initiative designed to identify new partnerships between university researchers, outreach specialists and local government officials.

The *Presidents' Forum on Meeting Coastal Challenges* is a medium for these groups to discuss ways to redouble and redirect university resources toward more "near-term" challenges resulting from the state's devastating coastal land loss problem. The initial meeting in this series was held Jan. 25, 2005 at the Lod Cook Alumni Center on the LSU Baton Rouge campus. At the inaugural meeting, which drew approximately 120 participants, a panel of scientists provided stark assessments on the current status of wetland loss, hurricane vulnerability, subsidence, spatial data, and coastal resource economics.

A second panel included members of the organization Parishes Against Coastal Erosion (PACE). PACE panelists were asked to respond to a hypothetical "no-action scenario" in which no additional funding for coastal restoration would be forthcoming. Given this "No Action" scenario, PACE panelists identified a number of areas in which universities might assist them with challenges facing their communities.

Examples of the near-term priority areas identified by the *Presidents Forum* include: 1) additional information and assistance with coastal drainage, infrastructure, and hurricane evacuation; 2) the need for socioeconomic assessments of marine industries, coastal developments, and cultural resources; and 3) legal analysis and policy guidance pertaining to specific municipal liabilities and a growing number of disputes over public/private property.

Building codes, coastal zoning and land use planning were also frequently mentioned at the first forum, and raising those issues determined the agenda for the first series of follow-up meetings.

On June 2nd the *Presidents' Forum* sponsored a special panel discussion at the 10th America's Conference on Wind Engineering. The panel attracted 75 scientists, educators, and government officials who gathered to discuss specific issues associated with hurricanes and coastal building codes. This national panel provided the springboard for a more Louisiana-specific forum scheduled for September 15, 2005 at the Lod Cook Alumni Center on the LSU Baton Rouge Campus.

In addition to building codes, the September 15th Forum will also focus on zoning and coastal land use planning. Louisiana's coastal managers are increasingly challenged by the long-term implications of industrial, commercial and residential development in a highly vulnerable and rapidly deteriorating environment. The upcoming forum will provide these managers with additional information and assistance in dealing with development issues related to smart-growth, no-growth, and retreat strategies.

To obtain a complete transcript of the first forum and a copy of the technical presentations, visit:
www.seagrantfish.lsu.edu/news/2005/forum.htm

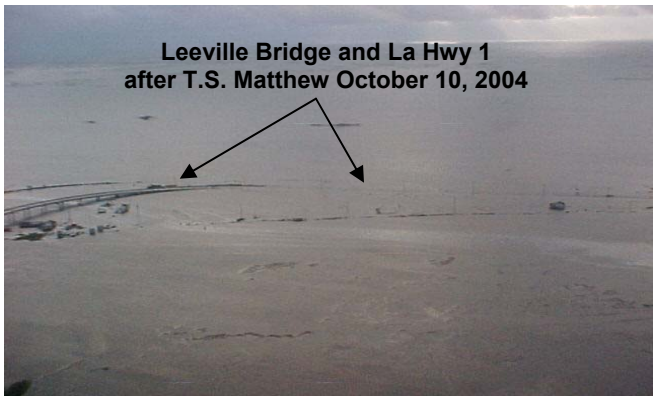
For additional information about the September 15th meeting or to learn more about the *Presidents' Forum on Meeting Coastal Challenges,* contact Mike Liffmann (225) 578-6290 (mikelif@lsu.edu) or Rex Caffey (225) 578-2266 (rcaffey@agctr.lsu.edu).

LA 1 Improvements Project Update

Source: Wilbur Smith Associates

The Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development (DOTD) is accepting bids for Phase 1 construction of the long-awaited elevated highway between Golden Meadow and Fourchon. According to Bill Gremillion of the LA 1 project consulting firm Wilbur Smith Associates, contracts for Phase 1 - Port Fourchon to Leeville - are scheduled to be let by June 29, 2005.

When fully completed, this 17 mile corridor project will cross wetlands, bayous, channels, and flood plains in a sensitive environmental area. The existing LA 1 is a primary transportation route for foreign oil offloaded from ships in the Gulf of Mexico and also serves as a hurricane evacuation route for a population of 35,000 and 6,000 offshore workers.



The vulnerability of La Highway 1 was exposed once again when the last storm of the 2004 season, Tropical Storm Matthew, inundated lower Lafourche Parish with torrential rains and high tides.

The existing road floods with severe weather and requires replacing with a 17-mile elevated roadway consisting of low-level and medium-level bridges, two elevated interchanges, and two fixed high-level bridges over navigable waterways – one over Bayou Lafourche and the Boudreaux Canal at Leeville and one over Bollinger Canal. The elevated four-lane structure will be built at a height above the 100 year flood line. A toll plaza facility and scenic overlook or bird watching area may be included in the final design concept.

This project will replace the sinking LA 1 Highway by constructing one of the longest bridges in Louisiana and possibly the longest bridge in the Americas except the nearby Pontchartrain Bridge in New Orleans, generally regarded as the world's longest bridge. The project will be built in phases as funding permits, with the most critical sections of the project (the southernmost) built first.

There are three phases in development of the LA 1 Improvements Project :

Phase 1A: Southern Project: Fourchon to Leeville

Phase 1B: Leeville Project: Leeville Bridge

Phase 2: Leeville to Golden Meadow

The Environmental Impact Statement for Phase 1A &1B was completed in 2003, and DOTD has since been finalizing construction permits, negotiating right-of way acquisitions, and conducting pile-load testing. Phases 1A & 1B are expected to be completed by the end of 2008. If you have any questions or concerns about the proposed LA 1 Improvements project, please contact William Huffstetler at Wilbur Smith Associates LA1@wilbursmith.com or David Miller at DTOD, dmiller@dotd.state.la.us.

Image credit: Wilbur Smith Associates

Proposed new bridge of the La 1 Improvements Project. The new bridge and elevated roadway will replace 17 miles of substandard highway between Golden Meadow and Port Fourchon.

For additional LA 1 Project information on the web, check out these links: www.la1project.com/index.cfm and www.la1coalition.org/home.html, http://

Hollywood Captures LA-1 Vulnerability

The movie "Oil Storm" is a recently completed docudrama that depicts the national crisis that could potentially unfold if critical petroleum infrastructure in south Louisiana is severely damaged from a hurricane. The movie focuses specifically on Port Fourchon and the vulnerability of the LA Highway 1 corridor. "Oil Storm" premiers Sunday, June 5, 8 PM ET/PT on the FX channel. For additional air times and information about the film, go to:
www.fxnetworks.com/shows/originals/oilstorm/main.html

NOAA Publication Release:

Science-Based Restoration Monitoring of Coastal Habitats, Volume Two: Tools for Monitoring Coastal Habitats

In October 2003, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), part of the U.S. Department of Commerce, released *Science-Based Restoration Monitoring of Coastal Habitats, Volume One: A Framework for Monitoring Plans Under the Estuaries and Clean Waters Act of 2000 (Public Law 160-457)*. This book brought together for the first time key restoration monitoring information applicable to coastal habitats nationwide. It provides useful tools for developing and carrying out monitoring of coastal restoration efforts. NOAA is pleased to announce the publication of *Science-Based Restoration Monitoring of Coastal Habitats, Volume Two: Tools for Monitoring Coastal Habitats*.

Volume Two: Tools for Monitoring Coastal Habitats expands upon the information in Volume One and provides tools that aid in the implementation of the framework established in Volume One. Information provided in Volume Two is designed more for practitioners who may not have extensive experience in coastal ecology. More experienced restoration practitioners may find the annotated bibliographies, literature review, and other tools of special interest. Both volumes of this manual will be useful to scientists, managers, and citizens involved in planning and conducting restoration monitoring efforts, including individuals in academia, industry, government interests at all levels, nongovernmental organizations, and the media.

Tools provided include:

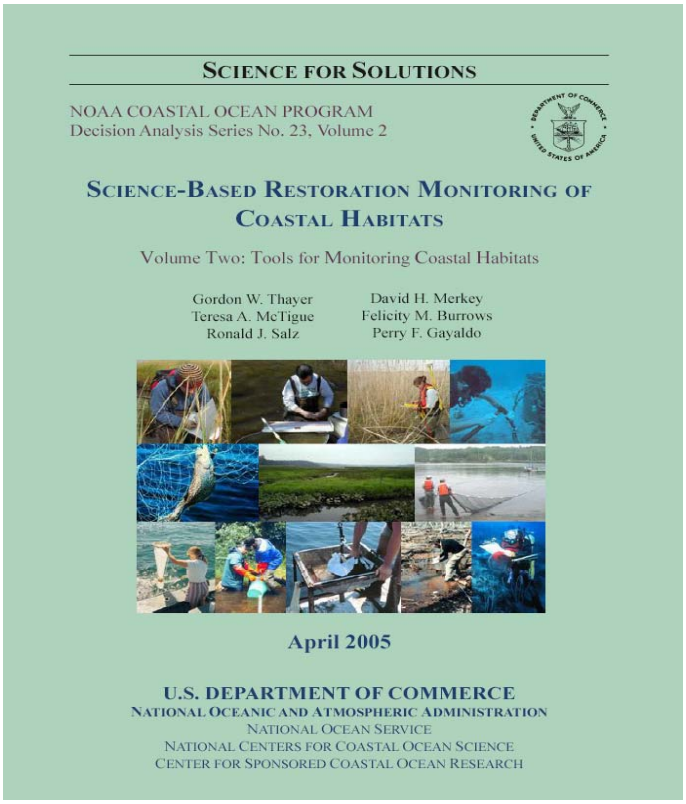
- Detailed treatment of the characteristics of each of the habitats and approaches to monitoring in that habitat
- Discussion of how to monitor the human dimensions of coastal restoration projects
- Review of how to select reference sites or conditions
- Representative index of restoration monitoring programs
- List of costs associated with project monitoring, and
- Review of Federal legislation relevant to restoration monitoring

Coastal habitats included in *Science-Based Restoration Monitoring of Coastal Habitats* include: water column, rock bottom, coral reefs, oyster reefs, soft bottom, kelp and other macroalgae, rocky shoreline, soft shoreline, submerged aquatic vegetation, marshes, mangrove swamps, deepwater swamps, and riverine forests.

"Volume Two provides support for and expands upon the framework for restoration monitoring presented in Volume One," said lead author Gordon Thayer, of the NOAA National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science (NCCOS). "Readers are presented with the background needed to make critical decisions necessary in the process of developing and implementing a monitoring plan."

While the effort to develop this manual was based in NCCOS, the volumes are the product of teamwork among scientists from NOAA (NCCOS, the Office of Habitat Conservation, the Great Lakes Environmental Research Laboratory, and the Office of Science and Technology) and the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. Authors, contributors, and reviewers in this project came from academia, private industry, non-governmental organizations, as well as Federal and State government agencies.

For additional information and printed copies of the manual, please contact, Teresa McTigue; National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science (N/SCI1); Center for Coastal Monitoring and Assessment; 1305 East-West Highway, Room 8409; Silver Spring, MD 20910; phone: (301) 713-3028 x 141; email: restoration.monitoring@noaa.gov.



Copies of the new manual Science-Based Restoration Monitoring of Coastal Habitats, Volume Two: Tools for Monitoring Coastal Habitats, as well as the earlier volume, can be downloaded as a PDF by visiting: http://coastalscience.noaa.gov/ecosystems/estuaries/restoration_monitoring.html

Senate Committee Holds Hearing on Coastal Zone Management Act Legislation

Source: J. Rozum, NEMO Listserv

On May 25th, the Senate Commerce Committee held a hearing on the reauthorization of the Coastal Zone Management Act (S. 360). The CZMA legislation, introduced by Sen. Olympia Snowe (R-ME), reauthorizes the 33-year old program and increases funding for coastal programs.

The legislation would add a new coastal community program that provides grants to deal with non-point source pollution mitigation projects. These grants could be used for a variety of projects, including monitoring, mapping, or direct mitigation. Other community-based programs aimed at helping manage growth in coastal areas would also see an increase in funding.

The hearing on CZMA comes on the heels of action in the House aimed at codifying the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). Last week, the House Science Committee approved H.R. 50, the NOAA Administration Act. The legislation would set NOAA's mission, structure and operations in federal law. NOAA was originally established through Executive Order. Codification of NOAA was a key recommendation of the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy.

The House Resources Committee has joint jurisdiction with the Science Committee. The Resources Subcommittee on Fisheries and Oceans held a hearing on H.R. 50 in mid May in the wake of action by the Science Committee. The Resources Committee is expected to add provisions on coastal management, mapping, and fisheries that fall under its jurisdiction.

LCA Meetings on Caminada Headland and Shell Island Restoration Feasibility Study

Source: LCA

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, New Orleans District (Corps), in cooperation with its local sponsor, the Louisiana Department of Natural Resources, invite your participation to determine the scope of significant issues related to the draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Louisiana Coastal Area, Louisiana - Caminada Headland and Shell Island Restoration Feasibility Study.

Scoping is the process used to: a) identify the affected public and agency concerns; b) facilitate an efficient EIS preparation process; c) define the issues and alternatives that will be examined in detail in the EIS; and d) save time in the overall process by helping to ensure that the draft statements adequately address relevant issues. Scoping is a process, not an event or a meeting. It continues throughout the planning for a draft EIS and may involve meetings, telephone conversations, and/or written comments.

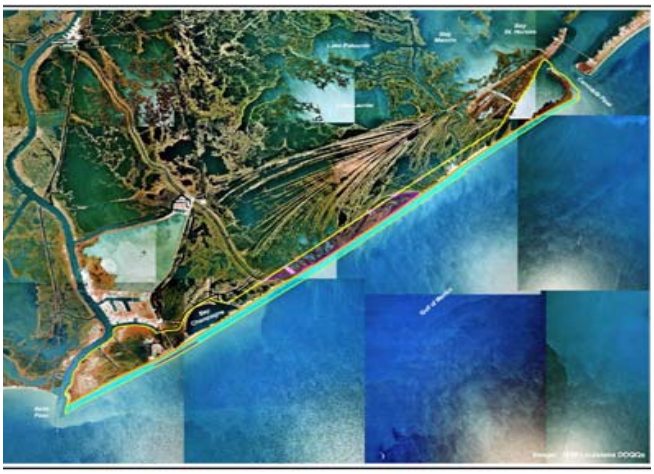
Agenda for Scoping Meetings (for both meetings):

6:00 - 6:30 p.m. Open House
6:30 - 7:15 p.m. Overview of the proposed LCA Caminada and Shell Island Restoration Feasibility Study followed by a question and answer session
7:15 pm - Accept formal public scoping comments

Meeting dates:

Tuesday, June 14, 2005
Belle Chasse Auditorium
8398 Hwy 23
Belle Chasse, LA

Thursday, June 16, 2005
Larose Civic Center
307 East 5th Street
Larose, LA



A review and discussion of restoration plans for the Caminada Headland (above) and Shell Island will occur on June 14th and June 16th at public scoping meetings sponsored by the Louisiana Coastal Area (LCA) Comprehensive Ecosystem Restoration Study.

NRCS Announces $4 Million Available for Wetland Reserve Enhancement Program

NRCS is now accepting proposals for single or multi-year projects, not to exceed three (3) years, submitted to NRCS State Conservationists from eligible applicants. The Wetlands Reserve Enhancement Program (WREP) is administered under the Wetlands Reserve Program and uses existing authority to enhance delivery of WRP.

The WREP provides a mechanism for the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to form special partnerships with others to improve or expand the delivery of WRP. This request for proposals is to obtain partnership proposals:

1) that address wetland creation and enhancement efforts on easements enrolled in prior years,

2) where partners will contribute significantly to WRP technical assistance costs (In accordance with the Conservation Technical Assistance Program Description -- technical assistance is defined as: help provided by NRCS, and employees of other entities or agencies under the technical supervison of NRCS, to clients to address opportunities, concerns, and problems related to the use of natural resources); and

3) that provide assistance with managing easement projects.

NRCS estimates this request for proposals may result in addressing wetland restoration, creation, enhancement, and easement management on approximately 5,000 acres. Proposals are accepted from all 50 States, the Caribbean Area (Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands), and the Pacific Basin Area (Guam, American Samoa, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands).

Proposals must be received in the applicable NRCS State office no later than 5 p.m. Eastern Daylight Savings Time (EDT) on June 29, 2005. NRCS State Conservationists will submit to the NRCS National Headquarters, the top two (2) priority proposals based on State resource concerns and technical resource needs.

Complete proposals will be evaluated by an agency review board at the national level. The review board will score proposals and provide scores along with recommendations for selection to the Chief, NRCS. For technical assistance, please contact: Leslie Deavers, National WRP Manager at Area Code (202) 720-1062 or email at leslie.deavers@usda.gov .

Louisiana Natural Resources Symposium: July 18-20, 2005, Lod Cook Alumni Center

For many years Louisiana State University hosted the premiere forestry education event in the South, the LSU Forestry Symposium. That symposium series has been inactive for several years, but a recent surge of interest has led us to reinstitute it. The new symposium has a new title that is more contemporary and reflective of the integration of all the natural resource disciplines. Accordingly, the topics and sessions of the symposium have been selected to include the broad array of natural resource policy, management and utilization issues that are critically important in the southeastern United States.

The symposium will feature papers from leading international experts covering cutting-edge issues. The target audience includes land managers, foresters, land owners, academicians and those interested in our great natural resources. A comprehensive and professional proceedings will be available to all registrants.

Registration costs for the symposium are as follows:

Non-student before July 5 - $100
Non-student after July 5 - $125
Student registration before July 5 - $20
Student registration after July 5 - $30

The registration fee includes all professional conference proceedings, host reception, continental breakfasts, coffee breaks and lunch. Those who cancel reservations at least seven working days before the symposium will be entitled to a full refund. Substitutions may be made at any time at no charge.

For additional information about Louisiana Natural Resources Symposium, contact Dr. Todd Shupe, Conference Co-chair, at (225) 578-6432 or tshupe@agcenter.lsu.edu or Dr. Mike Dunn, Conference Co-chair, (225) 578-0344, mdunn@agcenter.lsu.edu.

Governor's Science Working Group and Advisory Panel releases report on Louisiana's Coastal Wetland Forests.

The Coastal Wetland Forest Conservation and Use Science Working Group (SWG) was established in 2004 to provide information and guidelines for the long-term utilization, conservation, and protection of Louisiana's coastal wetland forest ecosystems from both environmental and economic perspectives. On April 30th the SWG released the report, *Conservation, Protection and Utilization of Louisiana's Coastal Wetland Forests.* This final report to the Louisiana Governor's Office of Coastal Activities lays out numerous observations under 7 major categories of findings.

Perhaps most important SWG finding is the statement, *"Without appropriate human intervention to alleviate the factors causing degradation, most of coastal Louisiana will inevitably experience the loss of coastal wetland forest functions and ecosystem services through conversion to open water, marsh, or other land uses."*

Three condition-classes were established by the SWG to categorize coastal forests based on sustainability given various biological and physical factors. Class 1 sites are relatively healthy forests, having an open connection to freshwater sources with the appropriate hydrology to allow for natural regeneration of Cypress and Tupelo stands. Class 2 sites have established trees and few signs of canopy deterioration, but exhibit flooding of a depth and duration that prevents natural recruitment of seedlings. Long-term sustainability of Class 2 sites is possible only through artificial regeneration of trees. The most seriously impacted forests are those in Class 3, in which chronically elevated levels of salinity and persistent flooding eliminate any potential for natural or artificial regeneration.

The report includes 14 recommendations pertaining to the science and policy of coastal forests conservation, protection, and use. Examples include establishment of a Coastal Wetland Forests Reserve System, the need for long-term base-line monitoring, and monitoring of restoration programs which could require 25 years to reestablish functional stands.

Additional recommendations include requiring the establishment of state-approved management plans prior to harvesting private timber stands on Class 1 and 2 sites and calls for delayed harvesting and/or harvest moratoriums on Class 3 sites. For additional information on the SWG or to obtain a full copy of 121 page report, go to: www.coastalforestswg.lsu.edu

Upcoming Meetings and Events

June 14	LCA Public Scoping Meetings Barataria Headland and Shell Island Belle Chasse Auditorium 8398 Hwy 23, Belle Chasse, LA http://www.lca.gov/lcajune2005.htm Julie.Z.LeBlanc@mvn02.usace.army.mil
June 16	LCA Public Scoping Meetings Barataria Headland and Shell Island Larose Civic Center 307 East 5th Street Larose, LA http://www.lca.gov/lcajune2005.htm Julie.Z.LeBlanc@mvn02.usace.army.mil
July 18-20	La Natural Resources Symposium Lod Cook Alumni Center, LSU Baton Rouge, LA Dr. Todd Schupp225) 578-6432
July 17-21	Coastal Zone '05 The New Orleans Marriott 555 Canal Street New Orleans, LA 70130 (504) 581-1000 http://www.csc.noaa.gov/cz/

Louisiana Wetland News Online

The LWN website provides an archive of the history of Louisiana's wetland and coastal resource policy during the past decade. If you have not already done so, I encourage you to obtain this newsletter through an e-mail subscription. By subscribing, you allow us to better track our readership and provide you with valuable updates between each issue.

If you would like to receive an electronic copy of this newsletter, please send an e-mail addressed to **rcaffey@agctr.lsu.edu** In the message body simply type your full name and the words, "Subscribe LWN".

Thank you,

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