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Third Delta Proposal Could Build Land Faster Than Wax Lake Project

CH2MHill presented its findings from phase one of the Third Delta Conveyance Channel (TDCC) reconnaissance-level feasibility evaluation at an important stakeholders meeting in January.

For the past six months, the CH2MHill team has considered the general feasibility of the TDCC proposal, using data to answer the question, "Can this project can be built?" After studying the type of soils in the proposed TDCC system, the amount of soil within the system, the sediment load in the Mississippi River, and the ability of the proposed channel to effectively move this sediment, the feasibility of the project has been confirmed.

In fact, the ultimate conclusion reached by the contractor during phase one of this TDCC reconnaissance evaluation is that the proposed delta-building locations will receive more sand, retain more sand and build land faster than the Wax Lake Delta, a model diversion project, has built land in Atchafalaya Bay.

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ROR Spreads Coastal Message at Clean Gulf Conference

Restore or Retreat Executive Director Lori LeBlanc and other ROR representatives urged government and industry leaders to support comprehensive efforts to halt coastal land loss in the Barataria and Terrebonne basins during the 2003 Clean Gulf Conference November 19-21 in New Orleans.

The annual event featured more than 2,000 registered attendees representing corporations, regulatory agencies and associations involved in the production, shipping or storage of petroleum, petrochemicals or hazardous materials.

"No one understands the economic significance of the Barataria and Terrebonne basins better than these industries that rely on our dwindling coastline as a base for energy production and thousands of miles of pipelines," said LeBlanc, who hosted visitors at the ROR booth during the conference. "Clean Gulf is an excellent opportunity for us to gain critical support from this business community, as well as government leaders who will be making important decisions on the LCA plan over the coming months. Our message this week is simple but strong: effective restoration requires aggressive action."

LeBlanc also served as moderator for a Coastal Erosion conference session on November 19, which included presentations by Gregory Stone of LSU's Coastal Studies Institute, Dr. Robert Twilley of ULL's Center for Ecology and Environment Technology and Tim Axtman of the U.S. Corps of Engineers Coastal Restoration Branch. Session topics covered the effects of hurricanes, flooding and erosion on industry and the economy, the land loss crisis and potential solutions, and an update on the Louisiana Coastal Area study (LCA).



ROR Executive Director Lori LeBlanc speaks with ULL's Robert Twilley at the 2003 Clean Gulf Conference in New Orleans.



From the Executive Director....
ROR's Lori LeBlanc

With or Without LCA, Momentum Must Not Be Lost

By now, we expected the release of the draft Louisiana Coastal Area (LCA) study for public review; however, its delay is still pending in Washington. Letters and phone calls have been made by Governor Kathleen Blanco and other state leaders to urge its release so that Louisiana can move forward with obtaining congressional authorization and implementing a comprehensive plan.

While LCA is imperative to a statewide comprehensive restoration plan, we cannot allow its delayed release to hold us hostage in our progress. In the meantime,

Considering the urgency of this issue, doing nothing is not acceptable. there is much that can be done and should be done to move forward and to continue this momentum. Considering the urgency of this issue, doing nothing is not acceptable.

The state has been proactive with specific components of LCA and has made substantial progress on the Third Delta Conveyance Channel feasibility study. Our goals in the coming months will be to continue making progress with the resources available and to ensure that these resources are maximized to their fullest potential. In doing so, we will call on our members and our regional leaders to wave the flag (or wear the life jacket) to demand that the momentum is not halted and that priority is given to the areas of critical need.

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Coastal Issues Could be Focus of New Legislative Committee

For decades, coastal restoration and flood protection bills considered by the Louisiana House of Representatives and Senate have had their start in a variety of committees like natural resources and environmental quality. In the 2004 legislative session, this could all change with the possible creation of a standing committee focusing specifically on coastal issues.

On January 21, Senator Reggie Dupre received word from Senate President Donald Hines that he would be appointing a "Select Committee" on Coastal Erosion and Flood Protection. It is anticipated that Governor Kathleen Blanco may take this committee appointment to the next level during a March special legislative session by converting this select committee to a permanent "Standing Committee."

"I believe Governor Blanco realizes how significant coastal restoration and flood protection are to the future of our state. Establishing a permanent committee dedicated to these issues would help to streamline legislative consideration of coastal proposals and increase awareness of our critical coastal needs," Dupre says.

"Maximizing Potential" of Davis Pond Project

After nearly two years in operation and over 40 years of planning, uncertainty continues to surround the Davis Pond freshwater diversion project in St. Charles Parish. In a test conducted November 30 - December 4, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers increased freshwater flow through the diversion from 1,000 cfs, as it has operated since March 2002, to the originally planned flow of 10,000 cfs. The results were disappointing, revealing the system's inability to drain the increased water flow, and calling into question the effectiveness of Davis Pond. While the project, considered the largest existing diversion project in the world, is living up to its original intent of maintaining salinity levels in the surrounding estuary, supporters of Davis Pond are now urging the state and federal agencies to re-evaluate the project goals with hopes of maximizing the flow rate and contributing the greatest gift possible to the ailing wetlands: nutrient-rich sediment.

"If, after all this time, we have not figured out how to fully utilize this project's capabilities for defending our land against saltwater intrusion, then large-scale efforts like Coast 2050 will undoubtedly be called into question," says the Greater Lafourche Port Commission's Ted Falgout. "How can we plug into a \$14 billion project, if we can't operate this comparatively pimple-sized pond effectively. We must find a way to maximize the potential of Davis Pond."



ROR's Lori LeBlanc also believes this latest test on the capabilities of Davis Pond may be an opportunity to re-evaluate the project's operating procedures and consider a more aggressive diversion of resources from the Mississippi River.

"We have many more problems now than the salinity levels that were identified back at the inception of this project in 1965," she says. "For \$120 million, Davis Pond needs to address our extreme land loss crisis, and we don't have time to wait."

The Davis Pond freshwater diversion project is the largest such diversion in the world.

Governor Blanco, Commission Urge White House to Release LCA Draft Report

Citing the devastating impacts that the delay poses to Louisiana's coast and the entire nation, Governor Kathleen Blanco and members of the Louisiana Governor's Advisory Commission on Coastal Restoration and Conservation recently wrote to President Bush, urging him to release the overdue draft report of the Louisiana Coastal Area (LCA) Comprehensive Study.

Originally expected to be issued for public comment in November 2003, the draft report remains under review by the White House Office of Management and Budget and the Council on Environmental Quality, potentially interrupting the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' plan to obtain programmatic authorization of the study's recommendations in the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) of 2004.

In her letter to President Bush on January 20, Blanco also requested that the president allocate \$50 million to fund science and engineering work, feasibility studies and start-up construction for restoration projects in critical areas.

"I urge you to join in our fight to protect 'America's Wetland' through support in your executive budget and release of the LCA Plan," she concludes.

Following are excerpts from the December 19 letter to President Bush from Commission Chair King Milling and Vice-Chair Randy Roach:

"We implore you to authorize the immediate release of the draft LCA report... We believe that the delay could significantly harm Louisiana and its citizens and have detrimental impacts, not only upon Louisiana, but the nation as a whole..."

To suggest that there is a true sense of urgency would be an understatement.

"Our coastal ecosystem, over twice the size of the Everglades, is in the process of imploding... there will be a point in time when the deterioration shall be so severe as to eliminate the possibility of rehabilitation..."

To respond to this crisis, we must implement a holistic, comprehensive engineering program and we must accelerate the rate of development and completion..."

"We understand these are difficult times to consider far-reaching programs with high price tags. On the other hand, Louisiana cannot face these issues alone, not only for economic reasons, but also because much of the loss is directly linked to the implementation of national policies, such as transportation, navigation and flood control."



Leaders Rally for Coastal Action During 2004 ROR Annual Meeting

"We are all here because we have in our hearts a desire to save our property, our culture and our way of life," ROR President Alex Plaisance told the group of ROR members gathered for the organization's annual meeting January 22 at Nicholls State University. "Failure is NOT an option."

He was the first of several speakers that evening to call for immediate action to protect the Louisiana coastline from future land loss. One of these speakers, ROR Executive Committee member Berwick Duval, stressed the need for more local government leaders and residents to get involved in the fight to save our dwindling coastline. With Congress expected to consider a Water Resources and Development Act (WRDA) bill this year, he said the window of opportunity for federal approval of the kind of massive restoration program we need is closing quickly.

"Those of us in Terrebonne and Lafourche parishes have the most to lose. We need strong political leadership and more citizens engaged in this issue, or we will lose our homes and our livelihoods," he explained.

In addition to updates on the Third Delta Conveyance Channel project, as well as ROR financial, membership and public relations activities, the annual meeting featured a presentation of the 2004 "Member of the Year" award to Ed Landgraf of Shell Pipeline.

Land Building

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"The Wax Lake diversion project wasn't built for restoration purposes, but delta-building has clearly emerged as one of its benefits," says ROR Executive Director Lori LeBlanc. "If we can build a large-scale diversion project like the TDCC, we will re-introduce the natural land-building processes of the Mississippi River into our system. This is the long-term solution we need for effective coastal restoration."

CH2MHill is now proceeding with Phase Two of the reconnaissance evaluation, focusing on alternatives to the TDCC as proposed, including the channel alignment, the location of diversion, the initial and ultimate channel capacity, and other land-building opportunities. This phase is expected to be completed in April, followed by evaluations of impacts and cost of the project. The entire \$1 million reconnaissance-level feasibility evaluation, funded by the La. Department of Natural Resources, should be completed by January 2005.

In the meantime, ROR representatives are asking state officials to begin considering funding sources and a cost-share agreement with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for the more extensive feasibility study that must be conducted before any federal funds for project construction can be secured.

If you have any
comments or questions,
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From the President...
Alex Plaisance, Jr.

The first phase of the TDCC study has answered several fundamental questions about the feasibility of the Third Delta concept and it is great news for south Louisiana. We identified the TDCC project as a potential long-term systemic project and the study results are confirming that it is feasible. Other issues will be evaluated over the next ten months and we believe that a viable alternative will ultimately result from this study. Therefore, we urge the state to begin the funding process for the TDCC comprehensive feasibility study which could be initiated by the end of 2004.



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Mission Statement

Realizing that the Barataria and Terrebonne basins are the two most rapidly eroding estuaries on the earth, and understanding that an economic and ecological travesty is occurring, the concerned members of Restore or Retreat seek to identify, expedite and aggressively engage in solutions to urgently achieve comprehensive coastal restoration.

BECOME A MEMBER/VOLUNTEER

Contributions to this organization are **tax deductible**. Restore or Retreat is a 501(c)(3) organization. Tax identification number is 72-1474850. Please make checks payable to Restore or Retreat, Inc.

Levels of Support:

Platinum	\$10,000 or greater	Bronze	\$1,000 to \$2,499
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