



FALL  
1996

# WATER MARKS

Louisiana Coastal Wetlands Planning, Protection and Restoration News

## Home Is Where the Marsh Is

**T**hey're rich, they're diverse, and they nurture an astonishing variety of plant and animal species that call them home. Louisiana's coastal wetlands loom large on the habitat landscape, and their loss should be cause for deep concern for all Americans.

- For the commercial fisherman on the Gulf of Mexico, Louisiana's wetland losses mean

the potential destruction of nursery habitat for shrimp and numerous species of finfish.

- For a family in Denver, the loss of a primary source of seafood means scarcity and higher prices.
- For the duckhunter in Indiana, wetland losses threaten the wintering grounds for millions of waterfowl.

- For the Californian vacationing in Louisiana, the losses mean less chance of seeing an otter, an alligator, or a roseate spoonbill.

Federal and state efforts to reverse the loss of wetlands are the best hope for the birds, animals and fish that live in the marshes and estuaries. From a strictly economic point of view, the fisheries and wildlife habitat of the coastal wetlands contributes enormously to the well-being of Americans in general. Louisiana's commercial fishing industry alone produces over a billion pounds in annual landings. The state leads the nation in the harvests of shrimp, menhaden, crabs and oysters.

Otter, mink, raccoon, muskrat and nutria make Louisiana number one among all the states in the production of wild fur pelts. As much as 40 percent of



One of the more common wildlife species to inhabit coastal Louisiana — brown pelicans — nest on Queen Bess island in Jefferson Parish. (ACOE photo)

continued on page 2

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*Water Marks* is published twice a year by the Louisiana Coastal Wetlands Conservation and Restoration Task Force to communicate news and issues of interest related to the Coastal Wetlands Planning, Protection and Restoration Act of 1990. This legislation funds wetlands enhancement projects nationwide, designating approximately \$35 million annually for work in Louisiana. The state contributes another 25 percent toward the costs of project construction.

#### Task Force member agencies:

Department of the Army  
Department of Agriculture  
Department of Commerce  
Environmental Protection Agency  
Department of the Interior  
State of Louisiana

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## Home Is Where The Marsh Is *continued from page 1*



Gulls — another frequent flier in the coastal zone — rise to chase a shrimper off Rurheford Beach. (ACOE photo)

the nation's wild fur harvest comes from Louisiana wetlands in any given year.

That quintessential creature of the swamp, the alligator, makes a significant economic contribution as well. Once listed as endangered in Louisiana, alligators now number in the hundreds of thousands, thanks to extensive management by the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries. More than 25,000 wild alligators are harvested each year, while nearly 100 commercial alligator farms in south Louisiana raise alligators from eggs taken from the wild.

Some of the most important benefits of the wetlands, however, can't be translated into dollars and cents. Sport

fishing, hunting and ecotourist activities like boating, skiing, swimming, hiking, bird watching, photography and painting are an important part of the good life to Americans who visit the coastal wetlands. In addition, the state's wetlands provide important habitat for 15 million waterbirds each year, including 20 percent of the North American population of dabbling ducks and over 400,000 geese. The area is equally popular with neotropical migratory songbirds that winter in Central and South America and stop here on their spring migrations northward, adding an international dimension to what is already an area of distinct national importance. ○

# Dedications Mark Two Completed Projects

**R**ecent dedication ceremonies celebrated the completion of two major hydrologic restoration projects — Bayou Sauvage Wetland Restoration Project, Phase One, and the Mud Lake

## Bayou Sauvage Wetland Restoration Project



U.S. Senator John Breaux (D-LA), primary author of CWPPRA, served as master



Senator John Breaux addresses attendees at the Bayou Sauvage project dedication held on August 12. (USFWS photo)

by Noreen Clough, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Regional Director; Jack Caldwell, Secretary of the Louisiana Department of Natural Resources; and CWPPRA Task

Force members.

Phase One of the project, completed in May, will restore approximately 1,050 acres of valuable marsh habitat in the nation's largest urban refuge,

[continued on page 4](#)







A deck's-eye view into the Bayou Sauvage National Wildlife Refuge. More than 1,000 acres of wetlands will be restored by Phase One of the project. (USFWS photo)

Hydrologic Restoration Project. Combined, these projects have restored and enhanced approximately 4,250 acres of emergent wetlands.

of ceremonies at the Bayou Sauvage project dedication, held August 12 at Ridge Trail in the Bayou Sauvage National Wildlife Refuge. Senator Breaux was joined

## Icon Legend

CWPPRA engineers rely on four basic techniques when creating, protecting or restoring coastal wetlands. In issues of *Water Marks*, the techniques used in each project are identified by the icons explained below.

 <p><b>Vegetative</b> Vegetative techniques replace plant life lost through waterponding, erosion and saltwater intrusion.</p>	 <p><b>Sedimentary</b> Sedimentary techniques mimic the natural process of accretion (wetland building) by using diverted or dredged sediments.</p>
 <p><b>Structural</b> Structural techniques use natural and man-made materials to protect existing wetlands subject to erosion or subsidence.</p>	 <p><b>Hydrologic</b> Hydrologic techniques increase or decrease the amount of water flowing into or out of wetlands, returning water flows to more natural patterns.</p>

## Dedications Mark Two Completed Projects

*continued from page 3*

located in New Orleans East. The refuge provides wintering and nesting habitat for



Project dedication celebration — CWPPRA style! A hearty barbecue of coastal favorites round out the day's events at the Mud Lake project dedication. (NRCS photo)

During 1990, approximately 52,000 ducks were observed on the refuge. With improved water management, those numbers should increase to 80,000 - 90,000. Shorebirds, small mammals, resident freshwater fish and other wildlife will also benefit from the improved habitat in the

(R-LA), Terry Ryder (deputy chief of staff to the governor), and several representatives of the CWPPRA partners.

The Mud Lake Restoration Project is designed to man-



Dedication ceremony guests examine one of the double flap gates installed at the Mud Lake Project. (NRCS photo)

migratory and resident waterfowl, wading birds, shorebirds and the occasional bald eagle, as well as a number of non-migratory resident wildlife species.

The project uses two 48-inch pumps along the east levee to lower excessive water levels in a freshwater impoundment created by the construction of the Lake Pontchartrain Hurricane Protection Levee, which isolated portions of the refuge from the surrounding marsh. Reduced flooding will encourage the growth of emergent vegetation, reversing the deterioration of the impounded marsh.

restored wetlands.

Phase Two of the project is now under construction and expected to be completed in December of this year. Project sponsors are the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Louisiana Department of Natural Resources.

### East Mud Lake



A dedication ceremony for the Mud Lake Project was held August 6 in Cameron Parish along the shoreline of the Gulf of Mexico. Speaking at the ceremony were U.S. Representative Jimmy Hayes

age the area as brackish marsh, an environment important for nursery-dependent organisms, migratory waterfowl, alligators and furbearers. The project includes maintaining hydraulic barriers, installing water control and wave-stilling devices, planting vegetation and introducing fresh water. ○

# CWPPRA the Answer to Saving Wetlands, Says Environmentalist

**W**hen environmentalist Milton Cambre first walked the shores of Lake Pontchartrain 40 years ago, the roseau cane was so thick that he had to slice through it with a machete.

During the four decades that have passed since those early walks, however, Cambre has seen some disturbing changes take place in the environment surrounding the lake. He has watched commercial land

development and massive efforts to control the wild waters of the nearby Mississippi River take their toll on Pontchartrain and its neighboring wetlands. The once-fresh water of the wetlands has turned brackish and the land has subsided. Plant life that provided cover for the waterfowl he loved has withered and died. And the once abundant wildlife and freshwater fish are gone.

“Vegetation along the shoreline of Lake Pontchar-

train has been dying off for over 30 years because of the intrusion of salt water from the Gulf,” Cambre said.

“Without the extensive root systems of plants like roseau cane to hold the soil in place, the tides carry significant portions of the shore out into the Gulf each day.”

The loss of vegetation needed for nesting and spawning grounds has been devastating to wildlife, Cambre said. “Waterfowl

[continued on page 10](#)



Like something out of a dream, cypress-draped bayous such as this one in Jean Lafitte National Park could be lost forever without continued restoration and protection efforts. (ACOE photo)