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NOAA04-R912
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
July 2, 2004

NOAA AWARDS \$96,500 TO LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration announced a \$96,500 grant to the Louisiana Department of Natural Resources as part of a multi-project cooperative partnership to restore marine fisheries habitat. NOAA is an agency of the U.S. Department of Commerce.

The funding will support the creation of a three-year partnership between DNR and the NOAA Restoration Center for habitat restoration projects that benefit commercial fisheries resources and recreational sportfish throughout coastal Louisiana. The partnership's objective is to implement on-the-ground habitat restoration projects that restore marine and estuarine habitats. These habitats may include salt marshes, seagrass beds, oyster reefs, mangrove forests and shellfish beds. Coastal Louisiana is currently losing approximately 25 square-miles of wetland habitat every year, and long-term restoration activities are critical for the state's ecologic and economic resources.

"This partnership between NOAA and the Louisiana Department of Natural Resources is a great example of the valuable projects and initiatives NOAA grants help support. This funding will enhance knowledge critical to restoration efforts along our nation's coasts," said retired Navy Vice Adm. Conrad C. Lautenbacher, Ph.D., under secretary of commerce for oceans and atmosphere and NOAA administrator. "NOAA and the Bush Administration are working to improve the understanding of our environment and to strengthen local and regional initiatives such as habitat restoration, protection and fishery development."

"The department will be seeking project proposals by the summer and expects some innovative ideas to come from our coastal parishes in this new effort with NOAA," said DNR Secretary, Scott A. Angelle.

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The NOAA Community-Based Restoration Program has been working with community organizations and local governments to support locally-driven habitat restoration projects in marine, estuarine and riparian areas since 1996. NOAA CRP funds on-the-ground habitat restoration projects that offer educational and social benefits for people and their communities in addition to long-term ecological benefits for fishery resources. To date, over 800 projects in 26 states have been implemented using NOAA funding and leveraged funding from national and regional habitat restoration partners. For more information on the CRP, please visit our Web site at: <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/habitat/restoration>.

Each year, NOAA awards approximately \$900 million in grants to members of the academic, scientific and business communities to assist the agency in fulfilling its mission to study the Earth's natural systems to predict environmental change, manage ocean resources, protect life and property and provide decision makers with reliable scientific information. NOAA's goals and programs reflect a commitment to these basic responsibilities of science and service to the nation for the past 34 years.

NOAA is dedicated to enhancing economic security and national safety through the prediction and research of weather and climate-related events and providing environmental stewardship of our nation's coastal and marine resources. To learn more about NOAA, please visit <http://www.noaa.gov>.