



## Stimulate the Economy with Green Jobs that Restore Special Places

Large-scale ecosystem restoration is critically important for fish and wildlife, for protecting communities, for providing clean water, and for improving economies that rely on healthy natural systems. The importance of restoration for communities was made tragically clear when Hurricane Katrina slammed into the Gulf Coast. Louisiana's coastal wetlands were so degraded they could not protect New Orleans from Katrina's fury. Restoring our nation's large-scale ecosystems will also help stimulate the economy through the creations of thousands of new jobs in industries such as engineering and construction. The programs we outline below are already existing programs where increased funding would mean new people hired almost immediately.

Across the country, centuries of exploitation and re-engineering are pushing major aquatic ecosystems to their tipping point where they may no longer be able to support the people, fish, and wildlife that rely on them. In the face of the already significant losses to healthy rivers, wetlands, and coasts, it is more essential than ever that the restoration mission of the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers be elevated to a national priority to ensure that aquatic ecosystem restoration projects are given the same—or higher—priority as Corps flood protection and navigation projects.

The added impacts of sea level rise, rising water temperatures, salt water intrusion, invasive species, and the increasing frequency and intensity of extreme weather events, all being exacerbated by global warming, are devastating already vulnerable aquatic ecosystems even as it has become clear that these systems are vital for buffering the impacts of climate change. Our nation must take action now to ensure these systems are preserved for generations to come.

### **Everglades Restoration**

The protection and restoration of America's Everglades, once a web of marsh and prairie covering 4,000 square miles, is far behind schedule. Continued delays will further endanger the River of Grass and fresh drinking water supplies for South Florida residents, which are under siege from increasing development and the growing threat of global warming. Funding these Everglades projects now will provide an immediate and substantial boost to the economy. Everglades restoration projects will create thousands of jobs in such industries as engineering, construction, nurseries, and material supplies.

### **Mississippi River Delta/Coastal Louisiana Restoration**

Ensuring an economically and environmentally sustainable coastal Louisiana is an urgent and vital task for the nation as a whole. Action is needed now to jump-start the bold coastal wetlands restoration needed for this sustainable future. A comprehensive protection strategy must include restoration of the "horizontal levees" — formed by barrier islands and coastal wetlands.

Where the Mississippi River meets the Gulf of Mexico it forms a complex of deltaic estuaries that are ecologically unique and vitally important to the economic, environmental, and the security-related concerns of the gulf region and its citizens. The swamps and marshes that previously covered

thousands of square miles of the Mississippi delta are disappearing at an alarming rate primarily because these estuaries have been isolated by levees and canals from receiving Mississippi River sediments while sea level rises and the land sinks. The loss of more than 2,000 square miles of wetlands through the years has led to a dramatic decrease in the natural protection afforded by wetlands and barrier islands to coastal cities such as New Orleans and Houma.

Funding of restoration at the level requested below will provide immediate economic stimulation, including creation of from 30,000 to 50,000 jobs. Such funding will also begin to put the gravely compromised Mississippi River delta back on a path to sustaining itself naturally, and to ensure that Louisiana's traditional industries are protected. Coastal Louisiana is the shipping gateway to 20% of the nation's waterborne commerce. The coast sustains enormously valuable fisheries and the communities that depend on those resources as livelihood. Fishery landings are third in the nation in economic value.

Now is the time to build on the promises made after the storms of 2005 to protect this area by funding this program in an economic recovery bill. Not only will these projects have an immediate and positive impact on employment in the region, but will also improve hurricane protection of our coastal communities and restore this rapidly degrading ecosystem.

### **Upper Mississippi River Restoration**

The Navigation and Ecosystem Sustainability Program (NESP) is a long-term plan to balance navigation needs and ecological restoration in the Upper Mississippi River System. It will tackle many of the cumulative environmental impacts incurred from operating the river as a navigation system. The Upper Mississippi River Environmental Management Program (EMP), the primary habitat restoration and monitoring program on the Upper Mississippi, has a goal of restoring more than 97,000 acres of habitat; the Army Corps reports that EMP has restored or created 28,000 acres of habitat. Funding NESP and EMP will provide immediate economic stimulation and new jobs, while improving habitat for this corridor that is so critical to the economy of our nation.

More than half of the fish and wildlife habitat created by the Mississippi River's backwaters and side channels

could be lost by 2035 if the management of the river does not improve. This would lead to a catastrophic collapse of the nation's most productive and diverse inland fishery. Loss of river habitat also threatens a \$6.6 billion river-recreation industry, which supports 143,000 jobs. (A River That Works and a Working River, The Upper Mississippi River Conservation Committee, January 2000.)

### **Restoration of Long Island Sound**

Upgrading wastewater infrastructure in Long Island Sound ecosystem will provide jobs and improve the water quality in this nationally significant estuary. This funding will be utilized by both New York and Connecticut to upgrade some of the nation's oldest water infrastructure.

Long Island Sound is a globally significant ecosystem providing critical habitat for an extraordinary array of birds, fish and other wildlife, and contributing more than \$6 billion to the Northeast regional economy annually. The quality of its waters and marine environments impact more Americans than any other estuary in the United States, as more than 28 million people (10 percent of the US population) who live within 50 miles of its shores.

The Sound's gravest threat is excessive nitrogen discharges from sewage treatment plants and other non-point sources. Unprecedented nitrogen loading has resulted in a steadily expanding "dead zone" in which excessive oxygen depletion is choking out aquatic life, harming the vital fishery, hampering recreational opportunities, and the diminishing the regions' economic vitality.

The EPA and Governors of New York and Connecticut have entered into an agreement to reduce nitrogen by 58.5 percent below 1990 levels by 2014. To meet this goal, billions in federal funding are needed for wastewater infrastructure upgrades to fix some of the nation's oldest water systems and restore this vitally important estuary.

### **For more information, please contact:**

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