

Gulf Coast Reconstruction Questions and Answers



1. What is the Service doing related to Gulf Coast Reconstruction?

The Service is actively involved in Gulf Coast restoration. The Service is maximizing its current capabilities to participate in the restoration efforts, including the following actions:

- We are working with the Southeast Natural Resources Leadership Group, made up of the region's Federal natural resources agencies, to assure that an efficient, comprehensive and holistic approach to the effort is maintained.



Holly Beach, September 25, 2005

- Our field offices have contributed hundreds of hours assisting and facilitating the work of FEMA, the Environmental Protection Agency and the Corps of Engineers in the cleanup and recovery efforts. For example, a contaminants specialist worked on water quality issues in Lake Ponchartrain.
- Staff from the field offices have been working with the Corps in the identification of wetlands and have handled a number of emergency endangered species consultations that include requests involving emergency housing and landfill issues. This has allowed the restoration to move forward as quickly as possible while simultaneously protecting important natural resources.



*Cameron Prairie NWR
September 25, 2005*

- Our field offices are working with the State Departments of Transportation and Emergency Management Agencies to develop a comprehensive approach to hurricane preparedness and restoration in anticipation of the next hurricane season.
- The Service's Louisiana Field Office, located in Lafayette, is working with other agencies and the New Orleans District Corps of Engineers on the Louisiana Comprehensive Protection and Restoration Project (LACPR), the Coastal Wetlands Planning, Protection and Restoration Act (CWPPRA), the Louisiana Coastal Area Plan (LCA), and the State-led Coastal Impact Assistance Program (CIAP) all directed toward Louisiana coastal restoration.
- The ES Field Offices in Lafayette, Daphne, Alabama and Jackson, Mississippi are assisting FEMA and other agencies with their Emergency Support Function missions and other tasks.
- Service refuge personnel located at 10 coastal Louisiana refuges are working to remove debris and other hazardous materials from those refuges caused by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita and working to restore other refuge functions (within current budgetary constraints).

The Service received \$30 million from an initial emergency supplemental to provide immediate stabilization and repair of federal infrastructure. With this supplemental, the Service is working to rebuild its facilities and infrastructure on coastal stations to support the management and public use of refuge lands.

With a second \$132.4 million request we will be able to stabilize and repair the federal infrastructure we could not address in the first supplemental and continue the natural resources restoration or recovery. This would include addressing some of the hazardous debris removal following Hurricanes Katrina and Rita and conducting some surveys, monitoring, and management of trust resources impacted by these storms.



Broken gas well head spews fumes following Hurricane Rita on September 25, 2005 near Sabine NWR.

2. What does the Service have to offer?

Each of our field offices has a willing cadre of experienced biologists to assist in the recovery effort. For example, the Service in Louisiana employs numerous coastal fish and wildlife biologists with decades of experience working in Louisiana coastal restoration plus boats and other field equipment needed for field reconnaissance of wetland areas in need of restoration. We also have the benefit of over 20 coastal restoration plans developed over the past 20 years. In addition, we have the experience of planning and funding over 135 restoration projects, (over)

and constructing 83 of those approved projects in the Coastal Wetlands Planning, Protection and Restoration Act program, with our other CWPPRA Task Force partners, since 1992. It should be clearly understood that these staff resources are already fully committed.

3. How can the Service assist in developing a comprehensive ecological approach to Gulf Coast Reconstruction?

The Service is currently working with other agencies and the New Orleans District Corps of Engineers on the

- Louisiana Comprehensive Protection and Restoration Project (LACPR),
- the LCA Near-Term Plan,
- is continuing to work with the Coastal Wetlands Planning, Protection and Restoration Act (CWPPRA), and,
- the State of Louisiana on the Energy Act Coastal Impact Assistance Plan (CIAP) towards the goal of Louisiana coastal restoration. The Service's Southeast Regional Director, Sam Hamilton, represents the Department of the Interior on the CWPPRA Task Force.

The Service is the largest landowner in coastal Louisiana and it is critical that these refuge lands are restored and reconstructed to ensure a cohesive restoration strategy for the area. Refuge staff in the area is accomplishing all they can with limited resources.

4. How are the Service's partners helping in this effort?

Partnerships are ongoing in each of the States affected by last year's hurricane season. For example, the State of Louisiana is developing the State Coastal Impact Assistance Plan for coastal restoration in response to the congressionally approved Energy Act, with Federal oversight from the Department of the Interior Minerals Management Service (MMS). Ducks Unlimited is continuing to plan and build coastal restoration projects in partnership with State of Louisiana and the other Gulf States. Some

private coastal landowners are restoring and rebuilding with limited available resources and FEMA funds where available.

5. Who is in charge for the Service?

The work along the Gulf Coast is being coordinated by various Service field supervisors and refuge supervisors for activities in their work areas.

- The Service's Louisiana Field Office supervisor is coordinating efforts with the New Orleans District Corps of Engineers and other Federal and State agencies.
- The refuge manager for the Service's Southwest Louisiana Complex is ensuring the basic operational capabilities are back on the landscape by coordinating facility reconstruction in that area impacted.
- The refuge manager for the Service's Southeast Louisiana Complex has worked closely with the Corps of Engineers and other federal agencies to support recovery efforts in that area.