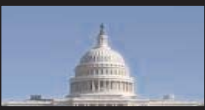




Hurricane Katrina REPORT CARD

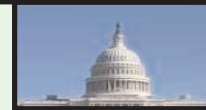
Two years after Hurricane Katrina much has become clear. We know that the devastation in New Orleans and surrounding areas was less a natural than a man-made disaster. Katrina's surge into New Orleans was the direct result of poorly constructed levees, an ill-conceived navigation channel, and the destruction of millions of acres of coastal wetlands. Furthermore, the storm's intensity itself was fueled by unusually warm waters in the tropical Atlantic due, in part, to global warming pollution.

How have Congress and the Administration responded to these lessons of Katrina and addressed the chief causes of its tragic aftermath? A report card is due on the federal government's response to global warming, reforming the Army Corps of Engineers and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), and restoring the wetlands along the Gulf Coast that act as a natural buffer to storms.



Name: U.S. Congress

Date: August, 2007



Subject	Grade	Greatest Success & Greatest Failure	Grade Explanation
Addressing Global Warming	C	<p>Success: Passage of stronger vehicle efficiency standards (Corporate Average Fuel Economy, or CAFE) in the Senate and a Renewable Electricity Standard in the House.</p> <p>Failure: Congress has yet to deliver final global warming and clean energy bills to the President's desk.</p>	<p>Congress has shown significant improvement since its failing grade last year. Both the House and Senate passed energy bills, each taking first steps toward a new energy future. However, Congress has yet to send the final bill to the President's desk because the energy bills must be conferenced (planned after Labor Day, when Congress reconvenes). Serious committee consideration is only beginning on cap and trade legislation to place mandatory limits on global warming pollution from major emitters. Such legislation is needed to promptly begin reducing global warming pollution by two percent every year – 20 percent per decade – to achieve the pollution reductions scientists say are needed. Congress could pull its C grade up to an A in the next few months by finishing the energy bill, and accelerating work on cap and trade legislation.</p>
Reforming the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers	D+	<p>Success: New requirements to make up for the loss of wetlands and require the Corps to update its 30 year old, failed operating playbook, which should lead to better environmental and fiscal practices.</p> <p>Failure: Rejecting a Feingold-McCain amendment to WRDA that would have helped set new national priorities for how limited Corps dollars should be spent.</p>	<p>Congress is finally poised to pass a Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) conference report that includes a few key reforms of the agency responsible for New Orleans' failed levees. The Corps, which too often destroys critical wetlands, would have to replace them whenever such destruction is unavoidable. And the Corps would be directed to update its 30 year old planning guidelines to reflect modern environmental and economic practices. Unfortunately, Congress has largely sidestepped the strong reforms necessary to avoid likely repeats of the tragedies of Katrina. No new national priorities have been set to help guide where limited flood control, navigation and restoration dollars should be spent and controversial Corps projects would face only limited outside independent reviews.</p>
Fixing FEMA	D+	<p>Success: Restoring hazard alleviation grants to the pre-2003 level of 15 percent of FEMA disaster relief costs.</p> <p>Failure: Congress has failed to reform the bankrupt flood insurance program and the House is unwisely proposing that the federal government expand flood insurance into providing wind insurance for hurricanes, tornadoes and other wind storms.</p>	<p>Congress was slow to recognize the degree to which burying FEMA in the Department of Homeland Security hampered its abilities, but this now appears to be better understood. Congress has restored available Stafford Act hazard improvement monies to support high-risk building buyouts, relocations, elevations and other risk reduction measures in future disasters to 15 percent above FEMA disaster costs (these funds had been halved for budget reasons in 2003.) The increase was not applied retroactively for properties impacted by 2005 storms. Congress has failed to make key reforms in the National Flood Insurance Program, which is now more than \$18 billion in debt to the Treasury. The reforms are needed to reduce subsidies that support risky construction, update and expand flood hazard mapping to include areas beyond 100-year floodplains, and require insurance behind levees and below dams.</p>
Restoring the Coast	B	<p>Success: Congress has directed the Corps of Engineers to develop plans to close the notorious Mississippi River Gulf Outlet, a little-used shipping channel that has destroyed nearly 100 square miles of wetlands and funneled storm water up to New Orleans' back door. Failure: WRDA will authorize the expensive, ill-conceived, Morganza-to-the-Gulf levee, which represents a misguided approach to hurricane protection and will thwart efforts to restore the coast.</p>	<p>The pending Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) will at last authorize the first phase of a long-term plan for restoring Louisiana's deteriorating coastal wetlands, which buffer storms and support abundant fish and wildlife. It will also deauthorize the Mississippi River Gulf Outlet (MRGO), which contributed to the flooding of New Orleans by intensifying the storm surge during Katrina. Unfortunately, WRDA also authorizes a pre-Katrina-era 72-mile levee project that will further damage coastal wetlands. In 2006, Congress approved legislation that will allocate revenue from new offshore oil and gas leases to coastal states, providing Louisiana with a much-needed dedicated revenue stream to fund coastal restoration. However, significant funds will not be available until 2017, which leaves a near-term funding gap for restoration work that cannot wait.</p>

Name: Presidential Administration

Date: August, 2007

Subject	Grade	Greatest Success & Greatest Failure	Grade Explanation
Addressing Global Warming	F	<p>Success: Acknowledging in the 2007 State of the Union the need to "confront the serious challenge of global climate change" and convening an upcoming climate change summit in Washington DC.</p> <p>Failure: Remains opposed to mandatory cuts in pollution from today's levels and clean energy policies such as a federal standard to bolster renewable electricity sources. The Administration has 17 months before the President leaves office to change course.</p>	<p>Recently, the President acknowledged global warming is real, humans are causing it, and something needs to be done. The Administration will host an international summit on climate change in Washington DC in September. But the Administration continues to oppose comprehensive legislation that would cut U.S. global warming pollution from today's levels. We can't solve global warming without reducing the pollution that causes it. The United States has a responsibility to take action ahead of other countries that have contributed less to the problem, and should pursue the economic opportunities in having American businesses lead the way to solving the problem. Upcoming events present an opportunity to change course. After more than six years of delay, the Administration needs to be a leader, not an obstacle, on the fight to reduce global warming pollution.</p>
Reforming the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers	D	<p>Success: Use of the budget process to stall some of the worst pork-barrel projects and make modest room to fund needed projects, including coastal Louisiana restoration.</p> <p>Failure: Failure to exercise Presidential power to engage Congress on needed Corps program reforms and their application to post-Katrina planning.</p>	<p>The Administration has not made reforming the Corps a priority. While it supported studies of the causes of flooding after Katrina, it has neither forwarded a proactive legislative reform agenda to Congress nor used its administrative authority to overhaul the agency. Its threatened veto of this year's WRDA doesn't even raise the inadequacy of Corps reform – its sole focus is the bill's bloated price tag. The Administration has attempted to use annual budgets to prioritize Corps projects away from some of the worst pork-barrel schemes and toward projects of national priority, but it has not vetoed a single appropriations bill when those priorities were ignored. The Administration's failure to exercise active leadership in rebuilding decisions for flood control projects and wetland restoration contributes to delay and confusion.</p>
Fixing FEMA	D	<p>Success: In 2002, the Administration initiated an aggressive effort to update the nation's flood maps and has continued this \$200 million annual commitment.</p> <p>Failure: Failure to propose long-needed FEMA reforms that would: (1) reduce and eliminate subsidies encouraging risky construction and (2) raise standards that would reduce risks to people, taxpayers and the environment.</p>	<p>The Administration has left most responsibility for post-Katrina reconstruction with local and state governments, while not engaging as extensively as is needed with hazard alleviation and risk reduction needs to promote safer building and rebuilding. Opportunities are being missed for appropriate buyouts and relocations and establishment of open space uses in highest risk areas. Consequently, some rebuilding is being located in places where tragedies will occur again. The Administration initiated and has continued to budget for updating flood hazard maps, which is much needed, but more funding is needed to complete the effort. The Administration has not moved forward to propose flood insurance program reforms. However, it has supported some Congressional reform provisions and FEMA recently completed a comprehensive program review that recommends important reforms.</p>
Restoring the Coast	D-	<p>Success: The Administration's Statement of Administration Policy on WRDA urged Congress to delete the Morganza-to-the-Gulf project, citing its threat to sensitive wetlands and its failure to account for post-Katrina realities.</p> <p>Failure: The Army Corps of Engineers has thus far failed to demonstrate a real sense of urgency about or commitment to the large-scale diversions of fresh-water and sediment from the Mississippi River that are essential to the restoration of Louisiana's coast.</p>	<p>After promising to rebuild New Orleans and south Louisiana after Katrina, the Administration has failed to show leadership, or even much interest, in the fate of Louisiana's coastal wetlands. Although a robust wetlands ecosystem will be an important defense against the rising seas and killer storms global warming will bring to Louisiana, the Administration in 2003 blocked a comprehensive long-term coastal restoration plan, and this year recommended smaller increments of WRDA's already scaled-back Phase One plan. In December, the Army Corps will release a congressionally mandated hurricane protection and restoration plan for Louisiana. An early draft showed a disturbing preference for massive levees over restored wetlands and failed to consider how structural hurricane protection could destroy existing wetlands and thwart wetland restoration.</p>

“ Many American coastal communities may face more intense storms as the oceans continue to warm and coastal sea levels rise in the decades ahead. We can and must do better to prevent the worst impacts of global warming, and restore the wetlands and barrier islands along our shores that serve as buffers against these storms. ”

- Larry Schweiger, president & CEO, National Wildlife Federation



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The National Wildlife Federation is America's conservation organization inspiring Americans to protect wildlife for our children's future.