

**Mayor's Environmental Breakfast  
Comments for Col. Tom Julich  
May 17, 2002  
University of New Orleans**

**Slide**

**Text**

1. Title slide: City of New Orleans/Mayor's Office of Environmental Affairs/Environmental Breakfast/May 17, 2002//Wetlands Impact on the Crescent City

Greetings. Introduction. On behalf of my distinguished colleagues, I'd like to add that it is indeed a privilege and an honor for this panel to present to Mayor Nagin the ongoing efforts by the Corps and the state to restore coastal Louisiana.

2. Graphics: Corps/DNR logos, side by side

The Corps of Engineers has entered into an exciting partnership with the state of Louisiana to take on the challenge of restoring coastal Louisiana. I will be addressing what large-scale actions can be done to address the problem. It will take the active participation of many other individuals and groups to make this a success.

3. Graphic: MVD/districts

I am District Engineer of the New Orleans District. The district, shown in blue, geographically covers the southern half of the state of Louisiana, approximately 19 million acres. Nearly one-half of this makes up the coastal zone of Louisiana.

4. Graphic: NOD boundary

Many of our resources are being lost and many more are in jeopardy. The effects of natural processes, such as subsidence and storms, have combined with human actions to produce a system on the verge of collapse. The construction of levees and canals, shown in yellow and green, played a major role in this loss. Such public works projects were built to protect and support nationally important infrastructure, navigation routes, and energy supplies. The country's need for these assets remains strong. However, meeting these needs is extracting a heavy price from Louisiana.

5. Photo: Delta marsh, west of MRGO,  
Bullet: Can the loss of Louisiana coastal wetlands be stopped?  
YES

The biggest question we often face is: can the problem of the loss of coastal wetlands be stopped? Are there solutions that are feasible from an engineering, environmental, and public acceptability standpoint? Are there practical solutions that meet institutional requirements, funding and affordability limits, and local, state, and national priorities? The answer is a resounding YES! Recent evaluations have shown that Louisiana's wetlands can be restored to a sustainable level. The engineering and scientific expertise exists and is ready to be implemented.

6. Bullet: Coastal Restoration/Historical Perspective

Many events have occurred to bring us to where we are today. And these efforts provide the basis and foundation for our current efforts. Some important milestones include: state funding, the 1990 Breaux Act, the Dec 1998 Coast 2050 Plan, the 1999 approval of a reconnaissance report based on the Coast 2050 Plan, and two feasibility studies in the Barataria Basin begun in 2000. This year, we will initiate feasibility studies to seek programmatic authority to construct projects that will adequately address coastal wetlands loss and ultimately provide a sustainable coastal ecosystem that will preserve Louisiana and a national treasure.

7. Pie Chart: Programs Available to Stop Louisiana Coastal Wetland Loss

This pie chart shows that we need a big change in our approach if we are to be successful. The reason? Current efforts address less than 1/3 or about 28% of the problem. To initiate projects that are needed to address the other 72%, we must pursue funding under the Water Resources Development Act process. This is the only process that can deliver the funding necessary to build some of the larger multi-billion dollar projects needed.

8. Photo: Bayou L'Ours N Unit, erosion along Little Lake, Bullet: Louisiana Coastal Area Potential Solutions

First, what types of projects are necessary to get us there? The strategies identified in our reconnaissance report and the original Coast 2050 Report reflect 4 major types of projects. Reintroducing sediments through river diversions; constructing wetlands; restoring barrier islands and protecting the shorelines; and restoring hydraulic flows to maximize marsh health can be thought of as tools to get the job done.

9. Graphic: Coast 200  
Ecosystem Strategies,  
Bullet: LCA Study  
Proposed Action Areas

This slide presents the Coast 2050 Plan as a basis for the reconnaissance report, and shows a laundry list of strategies that should be implemented if we are to restore the coast. These strategies are still preliminary and require a great deal more evaluation and effort to make them a reality. The cost of all of these measures is estimated to be some \$14 billion dollars. We must begin a landscape-scale program that attacks the root causes of the problem.

10. Bullet: LCA Action  
Items

We must make good the action items listed on the screen if we are to be successful in a comprehensive coastal restoration effort.

11. Bullet: Management  
Strategy to Restore  
Coastal Louisiana

Historically, the nation placed a priority on flood control and river management in the Mississippi Valley. We now know that in order to preserve these investments we must preserve the coastal landscape that protects them. It is therefore entirely appropriate that the Corps of Engineers, an agency that has served and assisted the nation in developing the flood control and navigation resources of the Mississippi River, take a leadership role in federal actions to produce a sustainable coastal Louisiana. As I said earlier, this project is enormous and will require the resources and brain trust of many. We are putting together a strategy to accomplish this that engages as many players as possible.

12. Photo: pelicans, mating dance (?) and graphics of Task Force logos, Bullet: Collocation= Collaboration

To that end we brought many of the participants together in one place, under one roof. This is the first time the New Orleans District has engaged in a collocated team. Significant agency support and effort is directed at the Louisiana Coastal Area Study. In addition, the Corps' Breaux Act team has collocated as well. The current 35-member team is expected to grow as we move from study to design to construction.

13. Bullet: Congressional Authorization

Our goals for this upcoming Water Resource and Development Act is to seek authorization of a federal task force that would assist in the implementation of this large restoration effort. We're also seeking direction to complete a comprehensive study of the coast to use as a road map for the task force to follow. We are seeking Programmatic Authorization in the Water Resources Development Act of 2004. This type of authorization recognizes the project concept, provides funding, and delegates implementation decisions to the agency.

14. Photos, two: shrimp boat and oil rig, Bullet: LCA Goals

The goals of the Louisiana Coastal Area Study effort are critical to the entire nation. With projects in place, we expect to:

- Prevent the loss of 1,000 square miles of America;
- Prevent the loss of thousands of American jobs;
- Maintain the flow of oil and gas to the rest of the U.S;
- Maintain 30% of continental U.S. fisheries; and
- Preserve a unique culture.

15. Photo: scenic  
marsh, Bullet:  
Commitment

To be successful, we need a commitment from all entities listed on the screen. Recently, the Chief of Engineers issued the Corps' Seven Environmental Principles, and in the process reaffirmed the high value the Corps places on environmental issues in all of our work. Over the last six months, we have had several meetings with Corps leadership to discuss the national significance of the wetland loss problem and the federal role in the solutions. One comment made...restoration of the Everglades is up and running; it is now time for the nation to focus on coastal Louisiana.

16. Graphics:  
NOD/state logos

Thank you.