



Contact: Kim Amendola, (727) 551-5707
Connie Barclay, (202) 441-2398

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
November 9, 2006

NOAA BUILDS ITS LARGEST BARRIER ISLAND PROJECT

Despite delays caused by Hurricane Katrina, NOAA is on schedule to complete the first phase of an 800-acre barrier island project in Louisiana's Plaquemines Parish. In one of the largest island restoration projects ever done by NOAA, workers are dredging and performing major earth-moving activities on Chaland Island, to create beach and marsh habitat that will help protect Louisiana's coastal communities and infrastructure from the devastating effects of wind, waves and flooding.

Over the years, the shoreline along the project area has eroded severely due to human and natural factors. Also, recent storms breached the shoreline and segmented the 2.6-mile island into three smaller fragments. Left unaddressed, these breaches threaten the integrity of several major natural gas pipelines.

"Wetlands and barrier islands are our first defense against storms," said Dr. Bill Hogarth, NOAA Fisheries Service Director. "This project will help absorb surging water and wind during storms, protecting our national energy assets and Louisiana's coastal communities."

At the project site, the construction contractor, Weeks Marine, Inc. is operating a 30-inch hydraulic dredge to pump offshore sediment onto the eroding barrier island, increasing its width and height. In addition, contractors are installing sand fencing to create dunes, and planting native vegetation for intertidal marsh habitat.

"I'm excited to see this project come to fruition," said Rachel Sweeney, NOAA Ecologist and Project Manager. "Hopefully this will be one of many restoration projects that NOAA and the Louisiana Department of Natural Resources construct over the next few years."

During the 20th century, coastal Louisiana has lost over 1.2 million acres of land, an area more than 25 times larger than Washington, D.C. If left unchecked, scientists estimate that the state will lose an additional 431,000 acres by 2050. This and other restoration projects help reverse land loss trends, and provide vital habitat for the Gulf's fisheries.

At \$60 million, this NOAA Fisheries Service-led project is the largest funded Coastal Wetlands Protection, Planning and Restoration Act (CWPPRA) project to date. By building nearly a third of all completed CWPPRA projects, NOAA takes a lead in implementing broad-scale habitat restoration projects that benefit marine fisheries and protect shorelines in Louisiana. NOAA has constructed 22 CWPPRA projects, totaling \$150 million in construction costs. These restoration projects have benefited 130,000 acres of coastal wetlands.

"Louisiana Department of Natural Resources and NOAA continue to work together to be the leading CWPPRA partners in completing coastal restoration projects that will protect the coast of Louisiana and enhance and increase the habitat of the many fish and aquatic species that flourish in the marsh," said Kenneth Bahlinger, Louisiana Department of Natural Resources Landscape Architect.

The CWPPRA, enacted in 1990 and also known as the Breaux Act, provides approximately \$50 million a year for coastal protection and restoration in Louisiana. The Louisiana Coastal Wetlands Conservation and Restoration Task Force oversees the implementation of CWPPRA in Louisiana. The Task Force is composed of the State of Louisiana and five federal agencies, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service, NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. This unique partnership has led to the completion of 67 projects throughout Louisiana's coastal zone. The program also has 71 projects either in the engineering and design or construction phases.

In 2007 the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, an agency of the U.S. Commerce Department, celebrates 200 years of science and service to the nation. From the establishment of the Survey of the Coast in 1807 by Thomas Jefferson to the formation of the Weather Bureau and the Bureau of Commercial Fisheries in the 1870s, much of America's scientific heritage is rooted in NOAA.

NOAA is dedicated to enhancing economic security and national safety through the prediction and research of weather and climate-related events and information service delivery for transportation, and by providing environmental stewardship of our nation's coastal and marine resources. Through the emerging Global Earth Observation System of Systems (GEOSS), NOAA is working with its federal partners, more than 60 countries and the European Commission to develop a global monitoring network that is as integrated as the planet it observes, predicts and protects.

###

MEDIA NOTE

1. Photos Attached – Credit both to NOAA Fisheries Service

Photo 562: NOAA-CWPPRA-BARRATARIA 562.jpg

Caption: NOAA Fisheries Service personnel oversee project construction. This barrier island project will create 800 acres of beach and marsh habitat that will help protect Louisiana's coastal communities and infrastructure from the devastating effects of wind, waves and flooding.

Photo 342: NOAA-CWPPRA-BARRATARIA 342.jpg

Caption: New dredge soil from an offshore borrow site builds up this fragmented barrier island. This project will increase the width and height of Chaland Island, creating fish habitat and protecting several major natural gas pipelines. Contractors are also installing sand fencing to create dunes, and planting native vegetation for intertidal marsh habitat. On-going operations will result in 2 1/2 mile long continuous shoreline. Recent storm events had cut the barrier shoreline into three segments. Pilings seen at water's edge on the left were several hundred feet in the Gulf of Mexico before project construction.

2. NOAA B-Roll is available through Video Transfer: (301) 881-0270 or e-mail videotransfer@movielab.com. Publication quality photos available at www.noaa.gov

ON THE WEB

NOAA: <http://www.noaa.gov>

Coastal Wetlands Planning, Protection & Restoration Act:

http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/habitat/restoration/projects_programs/CWPPRA/index.html