

LA Wetland Education Coalition

Wetland News for January 10, 2005



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1. Global Amphibian Assessment

The Global Amphibian Assessment (GAA) is the first-ever comprehensive assessment of the conservation status of the world's 5,743 known species of frogs, toads, salamanders, and caecilians. This website presents results of the assessments, including IUCN Red List threat category, range map, ecology information, and other data for every amphibian species. CNAH Note: Its easy to search on this web site. For example, type in Eastern Narrowmouth Toad, Redback Salamander, or Pacific Giant Salamander, and the pages pop right up. To find out more about this project, access <http://www.globalamphibians.org/>.

2. NASA'S ISS EarthKAM Program Seeks Participants for February & April 2005 Missions

ISS EarthKAM is recruiting middle school educators who would like to involve their students in an innovative and exciting NASA education program that gives students the opportunity to take images of Earth from the International Space Station. ISS EarthKAM picture taking missions are scheduled for February 1-4, 2005, and late April 2005.

ISS EarthKAM (Earth Knowledge Acquired by Middle schools) is NASA's unique educational initiative that gives students direct access to, and control of, a digital camera mounted in an Earth viewing window of the International Space Station (ISS). Students participating in ISS EarthKAM

identify places on Earth they want to photograph from space; use the ISS EarthKAM Web-based interface to calculate exactly when the ISS EarthKAM digital camera should take its pictures; submit their image requests to the ISS; track their image requests; and then analyze their images. The students' images of Earth can be downloaded for analysis and exploration within hours of being taken.

Teachers interested in involving their students in ISS EarthKAM can register through the ISS EarthKAM online registration system at <http://datasystem.earthkam.ucsd.edu/ekReg/ekRegistration.shtml>. The next ISS EarthKAM missions are scheduled for February 1-4, 2005 and late April 2005. Participation is free.

3. Scientists Hunt for Acid Rain and Methane in Wetlands

Depending on how you look at it, something good can always come out of something bad. That's actually the case in a new study on greenhouse gases by NASA scientists and others. The researchers discovered that acid rain inhibits a swampland bacteria from producing methane, a greenhouse gas. Visit http://www.nasa.gov/centers/goddard/earthandsun/acid_rain.html for more information.



4. Recycled Christmas Trees Still Important in Louisiana Wetlands

A delightfully dressed Christmas tree is a thing of beauty indeed, but its value doesn't cease once the decorations are removed and the holiday season is over. In the marshes of south Louisiana, recycled Christmas trees are lined within fences specially designed to help deter coastal erosion.

This year, the state Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is marking the 15th year since the Christmas Tree Fence Program was started. DNR Secretary Scott Angelle said there are 16 parishes involved in the project this season. Angelle said, "so many people and volunteers see the tree fence program as a way of doing something to care for the environment and is their way of joining the team to save coastal Louisiana."

The state continues to seek federal funding for a coastal restoration plan that will focus on major water diversions and marsh-building projects to protect its valuable ecosystem. Within the past century, each year, nearly 25 square miles of coastal Louisiana washes away.

DNR Project Manager Kenneth Bahlinger said that participating parishes usually coordinate their efforts with recycling offices and with school groups and volunteers. Trees are collected, stored, and then placed in pens built of wood along the shoreline. Once the discarded Christmas trees are put into the pens, wave action in the water is reduced, sediment becomes trapped, and fisheries habitat is enhanced. Some local projects include vegetative plantings worked-in behind the fences so that marsh vegetation growth is accelerated in the process.

The following parishes and contact telephone numbers are listed here for the 2004 Christmas Tree Fence Program:

Parish	Contact Phone Numbers
Calcasieu	337-721-3600
Cameron	337-775-5718
Iberia	337-369-4427
Jefferson	504-736-6440
Lafourche	985-632-4666
Orleans	504-658-4070
St. Bernard	504-278-4303
St. Charles	985-783-5060
St. James	225-562-2260
St. John the Baptist	985-652-9569
St. Martin	337-394-2200
St. Mary	337-828-4100 ext. 520
St. Tammany	985-898-2552
Tangipahoa	985-748-3211
Terrebonne	985-580-8145
Vermilion	337-898-4300

Bahlinger said other areas of the state outside the coastal zone also participate by recycling trees for the marsh. He said that Shreveport Green, an organization formed in 1990, in the City of Shreveport, has sent recycled trees to Lafourche parish for a number of years now. Bahlinger also said the City of Alexandria has in past years provided trees to Calcasieu parish.

While East Baton Rouge parish is not a program grant recipient, EBRP Recycling Director Susan Hamilton said she expects to send about 7,000 recycled trees to Cameron and Calcasieu parishes to replenish existing brush fences there. And in Lafayette parish, Recycling Supervisor Mark Pope said that trees from their communities have been going to Hammock Lake in St. Mary parish for the past several years.

For more information on this topic, please contact the DNR Public Information Office at 225-342-8955 or DNR Project Manager at 225-342-7362.

5. A Guide to the Wetlands of the Lake Pontchartrain Basin

The Pontchartrain Institute for Environmental Sciences at UNO, in partnership with the Lake Pontchartrain Basin Foundation and NOAA, announces the publication of the second edition of *A Guide to the Wetlands of the Lake Pontchartrain Basin*. This 46-page booklet is richly illustrated with color photographs and color maps, providing the reader with information for exploring the many wonderful wetland areas found around Lake Pontchartrain. The book gives an overview of the wetland habitats found in the Lake Pontchartrain Basin as well as some of the issues and challenges related to changes taking place in these habitats. The majority of the text is divided into four geographic regions: Western North Shore, South Shore, Eastern Marshes, and the Pearl River Basin. These regions are also graphically illustrated through the use of a series of Geographic Information Systems maps. A reference and resource section provides avenues of further research and can aid in the planning of field trips to sites in the book.

For more information, contact Dinah Maygarden, Pontchartrain Institute for Environmental Sciences, University of New Orleans, New Orleans LA 70148. Phone: 504-280-6718; email: dmaygard@uno.edu



6. Literature Connection for JASON EXPEDITION: DISAPPEARING WETLANDS (From: JASON Compass)

"Before the Saltwater Came" is a picture book that reaches all ages with a simple explanation of the major causes of vanishing wetlands along the Louisiana coast. Life-time Louisiana resident and children's author, Wendy Wilson Billiot's most recent book is a hard cover, 32-page, full color book that can be read to children as young as 3 and has no age limits. The main character is an old otter telling the story of her life in the marsh as the negative environmental changes occurred and the effect it had on her and her family. Billiot's purpose in writing the book was to provide a way for younger children to gain a basic awareness of the issue while challenging them and the adults reading the book to go further and do something about the problem. It is her desire that this book will make a difference, and if this book gets into enough hands and classrooms, national awareness will increase. This is her contribution to the America's Wetland awareness movement. To read the first page, learn more about the author, and order a copy visit www.wetlandbooks.com.



7. Permits May Be Erosion Fighter: State could block oil and gas drilling

Friday, December 17, 2004
By Mark Schleifstein Staff writer

Armed with evidence that offshore oil and gas operations have significantly contributed to the state's coastal erosion, Louisiana could seek to block new drilling permits until the federal government agrees to direct a share of royalties to reconstruction and conservation efforts, a legal expert says. "I see it as part of a master plan to apply pressure," Louisiana State University Sea Grant law professor Jim Wilkins said. "We're not going to receive any kind of concessions from the federal government unless we stand up and assert that this is having a terrible effect on the coast."

Wilkins said he has shared his ideas with the Blanco administration, which is devising a strategy to advance the state's long-rejected request for more federal aid in repairing the coast. The governor's adviser on coastal issues was quoted in a Los Angeles Times story this week as saying the state has "stopped just short" of refusing to approve oil and gas drilling operations in federal offshore

waters, while waiting for the Bush administration and Congress to approve a variety of measures that would increase the state's share of revenue from such operations.

But Blanco said this week that such an option "has never even crossed my mind. I was startled to read that in that article." Andy Kopplin, Blanco's chief of staff, said that adviser Sidney Coffee's comments on the drilling issue had been taken out of context.

Given the oil industry's long history in the state and Blanco's focus on economic development, such a move could be politically risky. It might also backfire in Washington if Louisiana is viewed as using the permits to extort financial aid, even with clear evidence that offshore operations have damaged the state's environment.

The action, if taken, would be through the state's authority under the federal Coastal Zone Management Act to declare a lease sale in the Gulf of Mexico "not consistent" with the state's coastal zone plan.

The federal government can override that decision, but the state can sue to stop the drilling. Florida and California have used the provision for years to block oil exploration and drilling off their shores. But experts say it takes more than the state simply declaring that offshore drilling is inconsistent to block exploration in those areas.

Mark Davis, director of the Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana, said those states also had political power to back up their complaints, both as substantial voting blocs in Congress and electoral votes in presidential elections. Louisiana's nine electoral votes pale in comparison to California's 55 and Florida's 27.

In 1991, then-Gov. Buddy Roemer attempted to use the consistency argument and the threat of blocking a lease sale to persuade President George H.W. Bush to increase Louisiana's share of offshore revenue, Wilkins said. Roemer believed he had persuaded Interior Secretary Manuel Lujan to increase the state's offshore dollars, Wilkins said, and allowed state officials to issue a letter saying the offshore lease sale was consistent with the state's coastal management plan.

But the increase never occurred, and Roemer revoked the state consistency finding and went to court to stop the sale. That failed when a federal court ruled that the state didn't provide sufficient information to back its claim that offshore exploration could be tied to coastal erosion, and that the state waited too long to make its challenge.

But since Roemer's attempt, both the state and the federal government have researched the causes of coastal erosion as part of the effort that has led to the development of the proposed \$1.9 billion Louisiana Coastal Area Ecosystem Restoration Plan awaiting congressional authorization.

Today, the state has all the evidence it needs that offshore oil exploration and production activities are one of the major causes of coastal erosion problems, said Wilkins, who is conducting research on legal strategies the state could use to find money to pay its share of restoration costs. Sea Grant, which is paying for Wilkins' work, is a university-based research, education and outreach program sponsored by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Agency.

Included in that evidence is a study conducted several years ago by University of New Orleans coastal geologist Shea Penland for the federal Argonne National Laboratory, U.S. Geological Survey and the Gas Research Institute that found that onshore and offshore oil and gas exploration and production are responsible for more than 33 percent of the direct and indirect wetlands loss in Louisiana.

"I've had discussions with Andy Kopplin in the governor's office about the research I'm doing on this issue," Wilkins said. Wilkins said it may be time to seriously consider playing the consistency card. Davis agreed. "We would be putting forth the true proposition that if this country is going to legitimately develop its energy resources, it has to do so in a way that recognizes its impacts on the areas that service that production," Davis said. "This nation's energy policy must adequately recognize the impacts that states, and particularly Louisiana, have suffered on behalf of this nation in the course of producing an abundance of oil and gas."

8. Project to Patch Up Coast Is In the Pipeline: River sediment would go to fix beach by Violet

Friday, December 17, 2004
By Mark Schleifstein Staff writer

An innovative project that would use a 10-mile pipeline to transport sediment dredged from the Mississippi River to rebuild an eroded barrier beach just west of Violet was recommended for approval Thursday by a technical committee that works with federal coastal-restoration projects.

The \$44.5 million Riverine Sand Mining/Scofield Island Restoration project would repair breaches and fill tidal inlets on the sand spit, creating more than 100 acres of dunes and 328 acres of dune slopes and marshes. It would be the first time that material dredged from the river would be transported that far by pipeline in a government restoration project.

Kerry St. Pe, director of the Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary Program, said the strategy is long overdue and that the pipeline can eventually be extended to assist in rebuilding barrier beaches and wetlands throughout the rapidly eroding western Plaquemines Parish marshes, and even as far as Lafourche and Terrebonne parishes.

If approved by the full Breaux Act Task Force at its Jan. 26 meeting, \$3.2 million would be set aside for the project's first phase, which includes engineering and land acquisition. The technical committee also recommended renovating a 250 cubic-foot-per-second siphon at White Ditch, just south of the Belair community on the east bank of Plaquemines Parish, and construction of a second such siphon nearby.

The \$14.8 million project would divert water from the river into nearby wetland areas, benefiting more than 8,200 acres of marsh. If approved, the project would receive initial financing of \$1.6 million. The technical committee recommended two other projects also be added to the list of Breaux Act projects, but only if enough money is received by August to pay for their design costs.

The Breaux Act program, which uses a combination of federal and state money to build small and moderate restoration projects, is in its 14th year, and the construction costs of previously approved projects has limited the amount of money that can be allocated to new projects. The result has been much smaller lists of approved projects during the past three years. The two projects waiting for money are: (1) Shoreline protection and marsh creation on the south shore of The Pen, a sunken plantation in Jefferson Parish. The full cost is \$17.5 million, of which \$1.3 million is needed for the first phase. (2) Creation of marsh on the east end of Marsh Island in Iberia Parish. The project would cost \$16.8 million, of which \$1.2 million would be needed initially. If the money is not available for the two projects by August, they will be placed back in the pool of projects to be considered for the next list.

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9. LAWEC-L LISTSERVE INFORMATION

- **Description of this listserve:** A listserve serving educators interested in LA wetlands.
 - **To send a message of your own to the listserv:** email LAWEC-L@LISTSERV.LSU.EDU and type your message into the body of the email. The message will be distributed to ALL PARTICIPANTS subscribing to the listserve. As a participant, you are welcome to send messages to educators subscribing to the LA Wetland Education Consortium listserve. We ask that participants focus their emails on educational opportunities and materials *directly related to wetland education*.
 - **To UNSUBSCRIBE from this listserve:** email LAWEC-L@LISTSERV.LSU.EDU and enclose the following single line in the body of the email
unsubscribe LAWEC-L
 - **To SUBSCRIBE to this listserv:** email LISTSERV@LISTSERV.LSU.EDU, with only the following line listed in the body of the email:
subscribe lawec-l YourFirstName YourLastName
For example:
subscribe lawec-l John Doe
- NOTE: You should not put anything in the subject line and should remove any automatic signatures from the email, otherwise the signup process will not work. You will get a return message indicating that you have been subscribed to the listserve along with information on other listserve operations you can perform (such as unsubscribe, etc.). If you have trouble, email Dr. Pam Blanchard at <pamb@lsu.edu>.

Please do not reply to the entire list unless you want everyone to read your message!

