

**Governor's Advisory Commission
on Coastal Restoration and Conservation
Comments for Col. Peter Rowan
October 2002**

1. The New Orleans District considers this meeting to be of the utmost importance, another step in what's necessary to restore the Louisiana's coastal wetlands. Unfortunately, our coastal landscape is in need of attention more than ever before with the loss of many of our already completed restoration projects due to Tropical Storm Isadore and Hurricane Lili.
2. My presentation today will provide you with information on the federal programs listed here. We have three authorities that allow us to address land loss problems: the Continuing Authorities Program; the Coastal Wetlands Planning, Protection and Restoration Act, known as the Breaux Act; and the Louisiana Coastal Area Comprehensive Coast-wide Ecosystem Restoration Feasibility Study, referred to as LCA. The Continuing Authorities Program allows the Corps to respond more quickly to smaller water resource problems experienced by local interests. It is comprised of nine different types of projects, each with its own authority and funding levels. However, only three are specifically tailored to benefit the environment.
3. We'll move now to the Breaux Act, which depends on periodical reauthorization. The latest amendment extends the act through 2009. The Breaux Act provides up to \$50 million each year and is targeted specifically to coastal restoration projects. The Corps serves as program manager. The Louisiana Department of Natural Resources is the non-federal sponsor and provides 15% of the costs. Up to 125,000 acres of wetlands will be restored once these projects are completed.
4. The Breaux Act is managed by five federal agencies and the state of Louisiana. Its general structure is one of work groups and committees that select and nominate projects for restoration. The Task Force approves projects for the annual priority project list.
5. This slide shows the impact that the continuing authorities program, freshwater diversions and Breaux Act projects have on coastal wetland loss. Along with some other minor programs, it constitutes only 28% of the restoration action currently taking place. Compare that to the LCA program with the lion's share at 72%.
6. The Louisiana Coastal Area Feasibility Study is our most recent and complex undertaking to date. The study will identify large-scale ecosystem restoration projects that address the remaining 72% of the pie chart just shown. It will identify long-range, large-scale ecosystem strategies to restore coastal Louisiana.

7. LCA was borne out of all previous restoration actions beginning with Act 6 back in 1989. CAP, Breaux, and LCA are all interconnected. In fact, the Breaux Act Task Force is reconsidering how it prioritizes projects, selecting those that will compliment, be consistent with and supportive of efforts associated with the Louisiana Coastal Area Feasibility Study.

8. There are many restoration methods we could apply but river diversions, marsh creation, barrier and shoreline protection and hydrologic restoration are the big ticket items.

9. We're looking for a program to come out of the study. We are thinking strategically into the next few decades. We're looking at a comprehensive coastal program, a \$14 billion effort. We'll streamline the process, delegate authority and establish programmatic cooperation agreements. We'll also be looking at innovative cost sharing approaches.

10. To that end, we have taken an unprecedented and ambitious step to collocate under one roof planners, engineers, scientists and biologists from the U.S. Fish & Wildlife, USGS, EPA, Commerce, the state's Department of Transportation and the Department of Natural Resources with one common goal...restoring coastal Louisiana.

11. Likewise, we envision the Governor's Commission working side by side with the regional agencies and bordering states to develop consensus and provide input to the Federal Advisory Task Force.

12. The Federal Advisory Task Force will be made up of Washington-level department heads and will coordinate policies and strategies and facilitate issue resolution among agencies.

13. It is important that the state continue to express their willingness as sponsors, to be open to the exchange of ideas as it pursues a comprehensive approach. The state, together with the federal and regional bodies, must develop consensus on the structure and strategy of this plan.

14. It is critical that the nation understands the significance of Louisiana's threatened coast and it's linkage to oil and gas, navigation and commerce and commercial fisheries as well as one of America's most unique cultures. Two things must happen. First, we need buy in of the \$14 billion program for Congress to approve the plan so that it's authorized in WRDA 2002. Second, we need to implement the plan. Congress authorizing LCA will allow us to do that.

15. It is equally important that agreement exists within the federal community and in the state's Congressional delegation. Congress and the administration require strong state support, strong sponsorship and strong stakeholder involvement to fund this endeavor.

16. A well-defined strategy, agreed upon by all, creates a sense of commitment ... a sense of possibility. It is imperative that we speak with one voice if we are to succeed in restoring our coastal wetlands.