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Obama Administration Plan to Restore Coastal Louisiana Wetlands Praised by Conservation Groups

Groups pledge to work with federal and state partners to develop long-term vision

(Washington, DC—March 4, 2010) Six local and national environmental groups praised the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) for unveiling the Obama administration's 18-month plan this afternoon to expedite construction of near-term projects, while creating a long-term vision and governance structure for restoring coastal wetlands in Louisiana. CEQ and the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) are leading an interagency working group created by President Obama last August to step up the federal response to catastrophic wetland loss in the Gulf Coast region that worsened the destruction caused by Hurricane Katrina.

"The working group's proposals will put this program into gear with strong new leadership, better science and improved coordination among federal and state partners to restore the Mississippi River Delta as well as create safe and resilient communities," said a joint statement from the [Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana](#), [Environmental Defense Fund](#), [Gulf Restoration Network](#), [Lake Pontchartrain Basin Foundation](#), [National Audubon Society](#) and [National Wildlife Federation](#). "Last month, President Obama requested more than \$40 million in his budget for multiple agencies to restore wetlands in Louisiana. This workplan will ensure that this funding and all future funding are utilized as effectively and efficiently as possible."

The Obama administration and Louisiana officials agree that restoring Louisiana's coastal wetlands is a critical element of an effective strategy for ecosystem restoration, storm protection, and economic growth in coastal Louisiana. Since the 1930s, Louisiana has lost 2,300 square miles of wetlands—an area larger than the state of Delaware—to erosion and sinking land, much of it caused by mismanagement of the Mississippi River and its delta. These coastal wetlands serve as a buffer against storms and hurricanes, providing protection for two million coastal residents, and the pipelines and refineries that service one-third of our nation's oil and gas production. They also provide critical habitat for wildlife and play an important role in the region's economy, including the most valuable fishery in the Gulf of Mexico.

"The interagency work plan released today by CEQ is a remarkable step forward for coastal Louisiana," added the groups. "The plan correctly identifies some of the most challenging issues plaguing restoration efforts. More importantly it outlines a strong and coordinated federal response consistent with President Obama's budget recommendations for the region."

“This working group is addressing exactly the right questions: 1) how do we make sure existing wetland restoration projects are built as soon as possible; and 2) how do we plan for an effective, coordinated and comprehensive restoration program moving forward,” concluded the groups. “By including the multiple lines of defense strategy, the CEQ working group has connected-the-dots between coastal restoration and flood protection, which is precisely what is needed. We will continue working closely with the working group to achieve the objectives outlined today.”

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