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Major General Don T. Riley
Director of Civil Works
United States Army Corps of Engineers
441 G Street, NW
Washington, DC 20314

Dear General Riley:

I am encouraged by the historic partnership formed between the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the State of Louisiana to develop a comprehensive master plan for the protection and restoration of our fragile coast, as mandated by the Congress and our state Legislature. I am pleased that the Corps and the State have responded quickly and are committed to making these two plans become one vision for coastal Louisiana.

Last November, our Legislature created the Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority (CPRA) of Louisiana to develop, implement and enforce a comprehensive coastal protection master plan that for the first time in our state's history will truly integrate coastal restoration and hurricane protection. By law, this single state entity will be your partner, representing the State in the long journey to establishing a safe and sustainable coast.

Our integrated team, comprised of Corps leadership and the CPRA, has been hard at work on the comprehensive coastal protection and restoration plan, with the interim report due to Congress on June 30. I understand that this report will recommend that certain projects be advanced to bring immediate solutions for our most vulnerable coastal areas and that the final report on comprehensive protection will be made in December 2007. As we work together as partners on this critical planning effort, I believe it is essential that we communicate clearly and openly on each and every aspect of this plan.

Therefore, I write to unequivocally express the policy of this State regarding the future of the Mississippi River Gulf Outlet (MRGO). Our people have spoken, our Legislature has made its will clear, and my Advisory Commission on Coastal Protection, Restoration and Conservation has recommended the immediate closure of this channel.

Over the years, MRGO has compromised the safety of countless communities and contributed to the loss of vital coastal marsh areas. The closure of the MRGO must ensure that communities are safe and our ecosystems are protected from further saltwater intrusion and coastal land loss.

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Specifically, our work must include a more precise plan for closure, restoration of the extensive wetlands lost as a direct result of the MRGO, and the integration of this closure into the comprehensive hurricane protection plan. We must also consider the navigation needs that will be affected by closing the MRGO to deep draft navigation, including expediting the construction of the new IHNC Lock and relocation of businesses currently depending on the MRGO.

As this report is formulated, I will be communicating this policy on MRGO through the CPRA directly to our Congressional Delegation. I urge you to join me in advocating with one voice on this issue, as well as on other critical near term aspects of our plan.

I understand, as do the people of Louisiana, that there will be many tough decisions in the coming months and years. Implementing these policy choices and determining their long term sustainability will not be easy. However, I am confident that working together, with a strong commitment to public input and thoughtful direction from our legislative leaders, we will set Louisiana on the right path for a safe and prosperous future.

Sincerely,



Kathleen Babineaux Blanco
Governor