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Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana celebrates diversion decision

Mississippi River will be reconnected with wetlands in Barataria Basin in historic project

Dec. 20, 2022 – After nearly 35 years of pushing for the immediate implementation of science-based, large-scale coastal restoration projects, the Coalition to Restore Louisiana is celebrating because the Army Corps of Engineers issued its Record of Decision on the Mid-Barataria Sediment Diversion, clearing the final major hurdle before construction can begin.

The project near Ironton in Plaquemines Parish will reconnect the Mississippi River to dying wetlands in Louisiana's Barataria Basin, replicating the natural conditions that built south Louisiana. The strict leveeing of the river is one of the chief causes of Louisiana's coastal land loss crisis. The Mid-Barataria project promises to build land and sustain existing wetlands in the basin.

"It would be impossible to overstate the importance of the Mid-Barataria Sediment Diversion, so this is a huge moment for our entire state," said Kim Reyher, the executive director of CRCL. "Finally, we are about to use the most important tool available to us: the mighty Mississippi."

Starved of nutrients, fresh water and periodic introductions of new sediment, about 2,000 square miles of coastal wetlands in Louisiana have turned into open water in less than a century. This wetlands loss has exacerbated storm surge, eliminated wildlife habitat and threatened the existence of communities, fisheries and industries across the state's coast.

CRCL was formed in 1988 to confront this crisis. Reconnecting the river to wetlands, a strategy recognized as crucial to any viable coastal restoration program by the overwhelming majority of scientists studying the issue, has been a major component of CRCL's mission since the beginning.

"Restoration of delta building, on a massive scale, using the sediment and freshwater resources of the Mississippi and Atchafalaya Rivers, is required to retard land loss," CRCL wrote in an influential report published in 1989.

"What a great Christmas and New Year's gift!" said Robert Gorman, one of the founders of the Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana. "The Mid-Barataria Sediment Diversion project gives hope for the future of the Barataria Basin. We raised our family along Bayou Lafourche, and I helped start CRCL to champion projects like this one to keep the basin alive and healthy."

The \$2.3 billion Mid-Barataria project is largely funded by money from the settlement of the Deepwater Horizon oil spill. It is expected to create more than 12,000 direct and indirect jobs, most of them in southeast Louisiana parishes. More than \$300 million is also being invested to help the communities facing changes resulting from the reintroduction of fresh water into the basin as the project is implemented. This includes the fishing industry, which will be affected by changing habitat conditions to parts of the basin. CRCL strongly supports allocating money to help the fishing industry adapt.

To learn more about the Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana, visit the organization's [website](#).

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[The Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana](#) is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to unite people in action to achieve a thriving, sustainable Louisiana coast for all. Incorporated in 1988, CRCL represents a unique mix of businesses, local governments, industries, scientific communities, national and local conservation groups, hunters, anglers and a broad spectrum of concerned citizens who all share a common vision and commitment to the sustainability of coastal Louisiana.