

Top Priorities for Restoring the Gulf Coast

The Mississippi River Delta Restoration Campaign, a group of leading Louisiana and national conservation organizations, recommends 19 top priorities for restoring coastal Louisiana as funds become available, including fines and penalties from the Deepwater Horizon oil spill already dedicated to restoration as well as pending court action against BP.

These 19 priorities will have a great impact on safeguarding the natural resources of the coast and ensuring a strong economy now and for generations to come. Each one is included in Louisiana's 2012 Master Plan for a Sustainable Coast which was approved unanimously by the Louisiana Legislature. Each has been vetted by the public, scientists, engineers, economists and resource managers and is ready to move forward.

Seventeen of the 19 priorities are located in the Mississippi River Delta because of the ecological and economic importance of the delta's resources to the entire region and the nation. An early start on a major Mississippi River sediment diversion and accelerating barrier island renewal in the Delta are crucial cornerstones for any effective Gulf-wide response.

The **four highest priorities of the 19 would help rebuild, restore and nourish wetlands that have been lost or degraded** in the decades since extensive engineering cut the Mississippi River off from its Delta. These diversion projects would allow the periodic flow of water and sediment from the Mississippi to be channeled into specific locations south of New Orleans for marsh-building, including:

1. **Mid-Barataria**
2. **Mid-Breton**
3. **Lower Breton**
4. **Lower Barataria**

The other top priorities in order are:

5. **Increasing Atchafalaya River flow to East Terrebonne Basin** through a diversion of Atchafalaya River water via the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway to sustain and re-invigorate marshes and swamps that are disappearing rapidly because they are cut off from natural river flows.
6. **West Maurepas Diversion east of Lake Pontchartrain** to provide fresh water, nutrients and sediment to one of the nation's largest bald cypress swamps which has declined steadily in the absence of flow from the Mississippi River.
7. **Barrier island restoration from Barataria Pass to Sandy Point** in Jefferson and Plaquemines parishes to maintain separation of the brackish lower estuary from the salty Gulf of Mexico and to protect bayside marshes.

8. **Barrier island restoration from Belle Pass to Caminada Pass** in Lafourche and Jefferson parishes to protect the barrier headland, and restore beach, dune and marsh critical for migratory birds, including the endangered Piping Plover.
9. **Central Wetlands diversion from the Mississippi River** in Orleans and St. Bernard parishes to restore and nourish marshes and swamps and improve resiliency against sea level rise.
10. **Construction of the lock on the Houma Navigation Canal** to reduce saltwater intrusion through the main conduit into Terrebonne Parish marshes. This is critical to the success of Intracoastal Waterway-Atchafalaya project ranked No. 5 above.
11. **Isles Dernieres barrier island restoration** in Terrebonne Parish on the outer edge of the Louisiana coast to help protect against storm surge and high energy waves by enhancing dunes, beaches and marshes.
12. **Timbalier Islands barrier island restoration** in Terrebonne and Lafourche parishes to protect receding coastline just east of the above Isles Dernieres.
13. **Re-establishment of the Biloxi Marsh Oyster Reef** in St. Bernard Parish to protect one of the most stable marsh platforms remaining in coastal Louisiana. The reef will provide wave and surge protection, support the ecosystem and, once established, can maintain itself naturally.
14. **Install salinity control measures on the Calcasieu Ship Channel** in southwest coastal Louisiana to prevent continuing marsh loss and thus provide greater protection to interior communities, such as Lake Charles, from storm surge.
15. **First phase of restoration of New Orleans East land-bridge separating Lake Pontchartrain from the Gulf**, a crucial line of defense from storm surge for more than 1.5 million people in eight parishes and the City of New Orleans.
16. **First phase of large scale Barataria Marsh creation** using dredged and pipelined sediment to build marsh and to work in conjunction with the Mid-Barataria Diversion, helping protect vulnerable Lafitte and West Bank communities from storm surge and tidal flooding.
17. **Golden Triangle marsh creation** in Orleans and St. Bernard parishes to restore badly damaged marshland needed to buffer a newly constructed surge barrier and provide important estuarine habitat for Lake Borgne fisheries.
18. **Re-establish the Bayou La Loutre ridge**, a natural levee in St. Bernard Parish, to improve hydrology, enhance storm surge protection, decrease saltwater intrusion and provide important habitat for migratory birds.
19. **Construct landscape features parallel to the Gulf Shoreline** in south central Louisiana's coastal Vermilion Parish to reduce wave energy and enhance sediment trapping, thus slowing shoreline retreat on the vulnerable southeast flank of the Chenier Plain.

Proposed Projects for RESTORE Act Implementation

Legend

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|  | Hydrologic Restoration | Diversions |
|  | Shoreline Protection | Type - Flow (CFS) |
|  | Ridge Restoration |  Freshwater - 5,000 |
|  | Marsh Creation |  Freshwater - 20,000 |
|  | Barrier Islands |  Sediment - 5,000 |
|  | Oyster Barrier Reef |  Sediment - 50,000 |
|  | Hydrologic Influence Areas |  Sediment - 75,000 |
| | | Diversions Influence Areas |
| | |  Sediment |
| | |  Freshwater |

