



MRGO Must Go Coalition: Restore the Coast as Congress Mandated

MRGO public comment period ends September 6th

Contact: Amanda Moore, National Wildlife Federation, 504-442-2702

John Lopez, Lake Pontchartrain Basin Foundation, 504-421-7348

For Immediate Release:

(September 5, 2012—New Orleans) A coalition of community leaders, policy experts and coastal scientists released joint comments today on the United States Army Corps of Engineers' Mississippi River Gulf Outlet (MRGO) Ecosystem Restoration [Feasibility Report](#). The report, which is being release four years beyond Congressional deadline, contains the Army Corps' plan to restore a portion of more than 600,000 acres of coastal wetlands and waterways impacted by the MRGO shipping channel. The MRGO has been directly linked to intensifying the destruction of Hurricane Katrina by destroying the wetlands that once buffered the greater New Orleans area from storm surge. The public comment period, ending September 6, is the last chance to comment on the Army Corps plan.

In their comments, [the MRGO Must Go Coalition](#) calls attention to the proposed Chief of Engineers report, which recommends to Congress "no further action" on their MRGO ecosystem restoration plan because of a dispute over who will pay for the restoration projects. The Coalition comments call the proposed "no further action" recommendation "an affront to the victims of the MRGO" and declares, "...the Corps is not legally permitted to stall implementation of the restoration plan based on a policy disagreement between the Corps and the State over cost-share arrangements."

"After the catastrophic damage caused by the MRGO, the idea of this report being put on a shelf because of a policy dispute is mind-boggling. All parties involved need to step up to ensure this plan moves forward. The need for restoration and protection along the MRGO transcends a policy dispute," said Dr. John Lopez, Executive Director of the Lake Pontchartrain Basin Foundation, a MRGO Must GO member organization.

Additionally, the Coalition offered other major recommendations to the Corps report that include:

- Instead of delaying the Violet Diversion as laid out in the Corps report, the Corps should expeditiously move the project toward implementation with location in the existing Violet Canal. The majority of marsh creation, marsh nourishment and swamp creation features depend on river reintroduction. The diversion project will allow for salinity control, sediment delivery to the Central Wetlands area and better adaptation to sea-level rise by helping maintain favorable salinity conditions for fish, wildlife, vegetation and living shoreline features. The Violet Diversion will also provide sediment and nutrients that can enhance marsh accretion rates.
- The Corps should prioritize the nineteen projects listed in the feasibility report that are also addressed in the [2012 Louisiana Coastal Master Plan](#), as they enjoy strong and widespread support in the science, policy and public spheres.
- The Corps should show strong consideration of the MRGO Must Go Coalition comments submitted in response to the Army Corps draft report last year. The comments were supported by more than 25,000 people, but were inadequately addressed by the Corps in the final report.

For more information and to read the MRGO Must Go Coalition comments, visit www.MRGOmustGO.org. Public comments of support may be submitted to the Corps from that site as well.

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Statement supported by: American Rivers, CAWIC, Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana, Environmental Defense Fund, Global Green-USA, Gulf Restoration Network, Holy Cross Neighborhood Association, Lake Pontchartrain Basin Foundation, Levees.org, Louisiana Environmental Action Network, Louisiana Wildlife Federation, Lower Mississippi Riverkeeper, Lower Ninth Ward Center for Sustainable Engagement and Development, Mary Queen of Vietnam CDC, National Audubon Society, National Wildlife Federation, Sierra Club - Delta Chapter