



## **NGOs Urge Federal Government to Restore Coast Damaged by Mississippi River Gulf Outlet**

(March 7, 2012-New Orleans) On Friday, the 5<sup>th</sup> Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals upheld the November 2009 landmark decision that found the Army Corps liable for catastrophic flooding in the Lower Ninth Ward and St. Bernard Parish during Hurricane Katrina due to the grossly negligent management of the Mississippi River Gulf Outlet (MRGO). In 2009, Judge Stanwood Duval ruled that the dangerous condition of the shipping channel was clearly acknowledged by the Corps for decades, but the Corps chose not to take a course of action to remedy the ongoing destruction and degradation of the protective wetlands. The MRGO impacted over 700,000 acres of coastal wetlands and waterways. These wetlands once buffered the Greater New Orleans area from storm surge.

This second ruling reaffirms the direct linkage of the MRGO to the deadly destruction of Hurricane Katrina. Urgent restitution for all impacted by Corps negligence and restoration of the MRGO ecosystem is imperative. Still, the federal government is expected to continue to appeal, further delaying resolution.

“Nearly seven years have passed since Hurricane Katrina. It’s high time for the federal government to step-up to the plate by compensating those affected and by funding MRGO restoration,” said Dr. John Lopez of the Lake Pontchartrain Basin Foundation.

Although the closure of the shipping channel was long-advocated by environmental and community groups, and even though the funneling effect of the MRGO was predicted by storm surge researchers, it took the drowning of entire communities to achieve congressional action for MRGO closure and restoration planning.

Restoration planning is ongoing. Both the Corps’ draft MRGO ecosystem restoration plan and the State of Louisiana’s draft 2012 Coastal Master Plan call for upwards of \$5 billion in restoration projects in the area impacted by the channel. The need for funding prevents implementation of this immensely important restoration effort. Settling this case could provide a major source of those funds.

“As an advocate for both the environment and reduction of flood risk, I believe the Court of Appeals decision will push government engineers to look long and hard at how other channels similar to the MRGO along the Gulf Coast increase risk and damage the environment. More importantly, we need to fix them before the next catastrophe” said Dr. Paul Kemp, Vice President at National Audubon Society and a member of Team Louisiana.

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Statement supported by: American Rivers, CAWIC, Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana, Environmental Defense Fund, Global Green-USA, Gulf Restoration Network, Lake Pontchartrain Basin Foundation, Levees.org, Louisiana Environmental Action Network, Lower Mississippi Riverkeeper, Lower Ninth Center for Sustainable Engagement and Development, MQVN Community Development Corporation, National Audubon Society, National Wildlife Federation, Sierra Club - Delta Chapter, Tierra Resources, LLC, and St. Bernard Parish Government.