

Groups Praise Commitment to Coastal Louisiana Restoration MRGO project named a priority in President Obama's Budget

New Orleans, LA – On Thursday, national and local groups applauded President Obama's fiscal year 2010 budget outline, which highlights two key areas of focus for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. In addition to Florida Everglades restoration, the Administration named Louisiana's coastal wetlands as a funding priority. The outline continued further by stating that the budget will fund "a study to identify the best ways to restore wetlands affected by the Mississippi River Gulf Outlet, and the science needed to support these efforts."

"With the 2010 draft budget's inclusion of funding for the restoration of coastal wetlands and cypress forests destroyed by MRGO, President Obama is giving new hope to Louisiana's coastal residents that the importance of our coastal wetlands to the Nation is finally being recognized," said Darryl Malek-Wiley, Environmental Justice Organizer with the Sierra Club, a member organization of the MRGO Must Go Coalition.

The MRGO Must Go Coalition consists of 17 environmental, social justice, and neighborhood groups that have been working since 2006 to ensure Corps of Engineers prioritization of work on MRGO and to secure funding for additional wetland restoration projects along Louisiana's coast. The Coalition advocates for restoration of the natural lines of defense that are an imperative part of Louisiana's coastal protection system.

"Levees alone will not protect the people along the Louisiana coast. Katrina and Rita made that very clear," explained Juanita Constible, Coastal Louisiana Technical Analyst for the National Wildlife Federation.

Aaron Viles, Campaign Director of the Gulf Restoration Network, is also a member of the Coalition. "Restoring the wetlands affected by MRGO will not only serve to protect the people of New Orleans and St. Bernard's Parish from hurricane risks, but it will also create much needed jobs and reduce global warming pollution. We applaud President Obama for his recognition of the importance of coastal restoration and his strong commitment to the sustainable protection of the Gulf coast," Viles said.

The Coalition is urging the public to visit www.MRGOmustGO.org to send a thank you message to the President and urge him to hold the Corps of Engineers to Congressionally mandated deadlines to restore Louisiana's coast and protect South Louisiana communities.