

**Contact:**  
Emily Guidry Schatzel  
225-253-9781  
[guidrye@nwf.org](mailto:guidrye@nwf.org)



## **President's Budget Maintains Commitment to Funding Gulf Coast Restoration**

*Groups praise proposed \$27 million commitment to revive vital coastal resources and benefit nation's economy*

Washington, DC (February 14, 2011) - Five conservation groups praised President Obama today for maintaining his commitment to Gulf Coast restoration by recommending the first-ever funding to construct wetlands projects to reverse wetlands losses in the Louisiana Coastal Area (LCA) of the Mississippi River Delta.

“The BP oil disaster shined a spotlight on the national economic importance of restoring the disappearing Louisiana Coastal Area ecosystem, and President Obama’s budget request recognizes this fact,” said a joint statement from the [Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana](#), [Environmental Defense Fund](#), [Lake Pontchartrain Basin Foundation](#), [National Audubon Society](#), and [National Wildlife Federation](#). “We are rapidly losing this ecosystem, which supports wildlife, recreation, waterfowl hunting, critical energy production infrastructure, the busiest port in North America, and the most valuable fishery in the Gulf of Mexico. In the face of tough budget choices, the President's budget recognizes that we cannot wait any longer to restore this critical natural and economic resource, and we urge Congress to meet this challenge.”

The President’s Fiscal Year 2012 budget request for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to fund LCA restoration is \$27 million, including \$10.845 million for wetlands feasibility studies, \$5.4 million for wetlands pre-construction engineering and design studies, \$10.62 million for wetlands construction projects and \$100,000 for the LCA comprehensive plan (see page 23 at:

<http://www.usace.army.mil/CECW/PID/Documents/budget/budget2012.pdf>). Congress has not acted yet on the President’s FY 2011 budget request, which included \$35.6 million for the Corps to fund LCA ecosystem restoration, split between \$19 million for wetlands construction projects and \$16.6 million for wetlands pre-construction engineering and design studies.

The President’s proposed investments are part of a larger effort that focuses the expertise and resources of a broad spectrum of federal agencies—including the Fish and Wildlife Service, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the Environmental Protection Agency, and the U.S. Geological Survey—on the critical restoration needs on the Gulf Coast.

Considering the rate at which Louisiana's coastal wetlands are vanishing, the funding requested in the President's budget is a critical first step toward coastal restoration. Louisiana loses a football field of land every 48 minutes, according to the U.S. Geological Survey. Since The Great Depression, Louisiana has lost 2,300 square miles of land, an area equivalent in size to the state of Delaware.

"Our coastal wetlands serve as a buffer that protects two million people in New Orleans and the surrounding communities," the groups concluded. "They also provide protection for pipelines, navigation channels and refineries that service one-third of our nation's oil and gas production. We look forward to working with the Obama administration and Congress to ensure that the funding is used on the best projects for restoration."

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