



B.A.S.S. signs Vanishing Paradise's Letter Urging Congress to Restore Louisiana's Coast

NEW ORLEANS—B.A.S.S. today added its name to Vanishing Paradise's growing list of sportsmen's organizations signing a letter to Congress urging it to dedicate the resources and implement policies needed to restore Louisiana's imperiled coastal wetlands.

The letter, authored by the National Wildlife Federation's Vanishing Paradise campaign and Ducks Unlimited, was signed by the three owners of B.A.S.S., Jerry McKinnis, Don Logan and Jim Copeland at Bassmaster Classic Media Day in Mardi Gras World in New Orleans. Other letter-signing participants include the Louisiana Wildlife Federation and Bassmaster Elite Series angler and 2003 Bassmaster Classic Louisiana Delta champion Mike Iaconelli.

"B.A.S.S. is committed to promoting progressive, positive change on issues related to conservation and fisheries management," said Logan. "We support the efforts of Louisiana's coastal restoration and are proud to be back in Louisiana for the Bassmaster Classic."

Iaconelli said he has witnessed the loss of wetlands first-hand this week while scouting for fishing areas for the Classic this week.

"This place is important to me," he said. "Winning the 2003 Classic here changed my life. I couldn't wait to go back to the pond where I won. When I got there, that little pond had become a giant bay."

More than 2,300 square miles, an area the size of the state of Delaware, have disappeared from Louisiana's coast over the last 80 years largely because of flood control and navigation projects that have isolated the water and sediment from the Mississippi River from its delta while allowing saltwater from the Gulf of Mexico to intrude far inland. An area of wetlands the size of a football field disappears along Louisiana's coast every 38 minutes.

That land and habitat loss threatens a world-class saltwater and freshwater fishery, an ecosystem that serves as the wintering ground for as many as 10 million migratory waterfowl, the nursery ground for fish that populate the entire Gulf of Mexico and the communities that depend on the wetlands for protection from hurricanes.

"Louisiana is nicknamed 'Sportsman's Paradise' for a good reason," said Land Tawney, sportsmen's outreach coordinator for National Wildlife Federation. "The Mississippi River built one of the finest estuaries in the world with first-class freshwater and saltwater fishing and waterfowl hunting. But, that paradise is vanishing before our eyes because the river's resources have been separated from the wetlands they built. The sustainability of this delta is 100 percent dependent upon returning the sediment and water from the Mississippi back into these wetlands."

B.A.S.S.'s commitment to helping restore and protect Louisiana's coast is part of a more than 40-year dedication to conservation. B.A.S.S. has worked cooperatively with state and federal agencies and other conservation organizations to develop sound management policies and protect and enhance aquatic resources.

"This year's Classic will show the world again what a wonderful fishery we have in Louisiana," Louisiana Wildlife Federation Coastal Outreach Coordinator Chris Macaluso said. "Hopefully it will also emphasize to those fishing and following the tournament the need to restore and protect our coastal habitat. B.A.S.S.'s commitment to Louisiana will go a long way in helping us achieve that restoration and protection."

For more information about the Vanishing Paradise Campaign and to read the letter to Congress, please log on to www.vanishingparadise.org.