



Audubon



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Contacts: Sean Crowley, Environmental Defense Fund, 202.550.6524, scrowley@edf.org
Emily Guidry Schatzel, National Wildlife Federation, 225.253.9781, guidrye@nwf.org
David J. Ringer, National Audubon Society, 601.642-7058, dringer@audubon.org

For First Time, President's Budget Provides Federal Funding for Gulf Coast Restoration

Groups praise proposed \$40 million commitment to replenish national economic interest in vanishing landscape

(Washington, DC—February 1, 2010) Three national environmental groups praised President Obama today for crafting the first presidential budget to provide funding to restore the Gulf Coast along Louisiana and Mississippi.

The Fiscal Year (FY) 2011 presidential budget for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers provides \$35.6 million for Gulf Coast restoration, including \$19 million for wetlands construction projects and \$16.6 million for wetlands pre-construction studies. The FY 2011 presidential budget for the U.S. Department of Interior's (DOI) Fish and Wildlife Service provides \$5 million for Gulf Coast restoration.

These proposed investments of more than \$40 million are part of a larger effort that focuses the expertise and resources of a broad spectrum of federal agencies -- including the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the Environmental Protection Agency, and the U.S. Geological Survey -- on the critical restoration needs on the Gulf Coast.

“By prioritizing the restoration of our disappearing coastal ecosystem, President Obama is recognizing the significance of coastal Louisiana to our national economy and landscape,” a joint statement from Environmental Defense Fund, National Audubon Society and National Wildlife Federation said. “The president’s proposed funding to restore this ecological treasure is a wake-up call for the nation that we are rapidly losing a region that is home to critical energy production infrastructure, the busiest port in North America, and the most valuable fishery in the Gulf of Mexico. Our nation cannot continue to ignore these vital interests.”

The presidential budget proposal creates a Gulf Coast ecosystem restoration effort that ranks the area with similar wetland ecosystems in the United States that have received greater attention and funding support, including the Florida Everglades and the Chesapeake Bay area.

Considering the rate at which Louisiana’s coastal wetlands are vanishing, the funding called for 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 larger than 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.”

###

Environmental Defense Fund, a leading national nonprofit organization, represents more than 700,000 members. Since 1967, Environmental Defense Fund has linked science, economics, law and innovative private-sector partnerships to create breakthrough solutions to the most serious environmental problems. For more information, visit www.edf.org.

Now in its second century, Audubon connects people with birds, nature and the environment that supports us all. Our national network of community-based nature centers, chapters, scientific, education, and advocacy programs engages millions of people from all walks of life in conservation action to protect and restore the natural world.

National Wildlife Federation is America's conservation organization inspiring Americans to protect wildlife for our children's future.