

**MINUTES OF
SOUTHEAST LOUISIANA FLOOD PROTECTION AUTHORITY-EAST
COASTAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING
HELD ON FEBRUARY 2, 2011**

**PRESENT: Carlton Dufrechou
Mark Schexnayder
John Lopez**

The Coastal Advisory Committee met on February 2, 2011, in the Second Floor Hall of the Lake Vista Community Center, 6500 Spanish Fort Blvd., New Orleans, Louisiana. The meeting was called to order at 2:00 p.m.

Development of comments regarding the Mississippi River Gulf Outlet (MRGO) Ecosystem Restoration Plan Draft Feasibility Report

Mr. Dufrechou commented that the MRGO Ecosystem Restoration Plan Draft Feasibility Report is not perfect, but it is one of the most comprehensive documents that he has seen for this area to date. It incorporates the multiple lines of defense strategy, uses natural land forms, and identifies the Biloxi Marshes and New Orleans East land bridges as critical land masses to be maintained. He listed some of the major concerns that have been identified:

- Violet Canal Diversion – Mr. Dufrechou stated that while a diversion reconnecting the river to the coast is critical for long term sustainability, there is no need to slice the coast up any more than it is already. He strongly suggested that the existing Violet Canal be used as the future conduit for an increased diversion.
- Sediments – The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' (USACE) plan recommends the harvesting of a large amount of sediment from the Lake Borgne area in a checkerboard pattern. Mr. Dufrechou recommended that, if at all possible, the sediments be taken from the Mississippi River in lieu of inducing another problem by harvesting the sediments from Lake Borgne.
- About \$900 million (almost one-third) of the proposed \$2.9 billion budget is currently used for restoration work in the central wetlands area. Mr. Dufrechou suggested that the central wetlands area should be restored, but at a lesser cost, and that the major share of that funding be used outside of the storm protection system.

Timothy Doody, SLFPA-E President, pointed out that MRGO restoration funding can be used to protect flood protection in concert with mitigation. He stated that protection of the flood protection system is a high priority. Mr. Dufrechou commented that the original authorization spoke about using coastal wetlands to enhance storm protection.

Stuart Williamson, Lake Borgne Basin Levee District (LBBLD) Executive Director, explained that there have been situations when the central wetlands, which are used as a retention basin, were filled with water from rainfall events to the point that it back loaded through the pump stations. High tides also contributed to this situation. The

LBBLD, as part of its flood protection responsibility, must close a gate on the Violet Canal at Bayou Dupre. The pumping capacity of the LBBLD's seven pump stations into the central wetlands is about 6,000 cfs. The Sewerage & Water Board of New Orleans has one pump station that pumps into the central wetlands. Therefore, there are drainage concerns if sedimentation is placed in the central wetlands and if any type of capacity is lost. He pointed out that just having a diversion through the Violet Canal may not be enough to achieve the target salinity rates. He suggested that the control of pumping through adaptive management be looked at in the future in connection with maintaining target salinity rates. A relief valve could possibly be used to maintain salinity rates in the adaptive management process. He agreed that some type of diversion is needed.

Flow rates and the reports previously developed by the University of New Orleans (UNO) and others on the Violet Diversion and other diversions were discussed.

Mr. Williamson pointed out that floodside protection with respect to armoring, with the exception of grass, has been bypassed for the LBBLD, which is the front line of defense for the City of New Orleans. He stressed that something is needed to stop or slow down the wave energy from 20 and 30 year events. The LBBLD has scour issues based on less than 100 year events. Mr. Dufrechou clarified that Mr. Williamson was seeking an MRGO ecosystem restoration project that could help break up or reduce wave energy. Mr. Williamson suggested that the barrier islands could be restored so that they could break up wave energy. Dr. Lopez pointed out that the USACE contends that the degradation of the Chandeleur Islands is not within the MRGO ecosystem restoration boundaries.

Mr. Schexnayder commented relative to salinity targets for the Mississippi Sound and Biloxi Sound areas and the few anemic projects in the upper basin. He stated that, in addition to the Violet Canal, the Bonnet Carrere Spillway should be looked at as a means to bring water into Lake Maurepas in a more rapid way to address the hydrology.

Mr. Dufrechou pointed out the potential difficulty in obtaining construction funding in the near term for the MRGO Ecosystem Restoration Plan due to the current economic climate. He suggested that while a recommendation can be made for a more comprehensive review of all fresh water sources including the Bonnet Carrere Spillway, that the response be formulated in such a way to point out priorities.

The use of multiple sources of fresh water, meeting the salinity target for the Biloxi Marsh, and the effectiveness of using the Bonnet Carrere Spillway to manage the Biloxi Marsh were discussed. Dr. Lopez suggested the establishment of an oyster barrier reef, which would break up wave energy.

The Committee discussed the potential impacts of using the existing Violet Canal for the river diversion with the assumptions and footprint presented in the USACE's plan and the potential impacts should the centerline of the canal be moved.

Mr. Dufrechou clarified that while the Committee supported the present Violet Canal as the location for river reintroduction, it also recommends consideration of all opportunities to introduce fresh water into the system to meet target salinities.

Mr. Schexnayder commented that he supported the use of sediments, if at all possible, from the Mississippi River. Dr. Lopez commented that the USACE advised that there is not an accumulation of sediments in this reach of the river at this time and that sediments would have to be pumped in from a distance downriver. However, the USACE did not evaluate use of a sediment trap. Dr. Lopez also suggested the use of natural gas to fuel the pumps.

The Committee discussed Dr. Lopez's recommendation to use oyster reefs outside of the Biloxi Marsh to reduce wave energy.

Mr. Dufrechou addressed the bank lines of the MRGO channel and the constriction of the channel. Dr. Lopez recommended the inclusion of at least one more constriction to break up the long reach between the IHNC barrier and Bayou La Loutre. The Committee discussed Dr. Lopez's recommendation and concurred.

Dr. Lopez advised that one of the Lake Pontchartrain Basin Foundation's (LPBF) comments dealt with the removal of the sills at the Pearl River to allow the flow of more sediment. The Committee discussed the benefits of removing the sills and whether this concept should be included in the SLFPA-E's official comments.

Mr. Dufrechou recommended the establishment of an MRGO Ecosystem Restoration Steering Committee. Dr. Lopez suggested that the steering committee should be institutionally separate from the USACE, but still able to interact with the USACE in an effective way.

The Committee concurred with the following additional recommendations:

- Achievement of target salinity levels in order to re-establish a self-sustaining system.
- Consideration of the storage capacity of the central wetlands.
- Educational outreach.
- Multiple sources of water and sediments.
- Establishment of oyster reefs.
- Constriction of MRGO bank lines.
- Establishment of an MRGO Ecosystem Restoration Steering Committee.

Mr. Dufrechou advised that he would draft and distribute the recommendations of the Committee by the end of the week for review by the Committee members. The recommendations would then be distributed to the SLFPA-E Board members for their review and comment.

There was no further business; therefore, the meeting was adjourned at 3:43 p.m.