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## Louisiana to Invest \$1 Billion in Coastal Protection, Restoration

**NEW ORLEANS, Louisiana,** August 13, 2008 (ENS) - Today, Governor Bobby Jindal announced plans for more than \$1 billion in coastal protection and restoration projects in Louisiana - the largest investment in coastal protection in Louisiana history

These projects, along with nearly \$15 billion in ongoing coastal restoration and hurricane protection projects in New Orleans and other areas of the state, represent "one of the largest public works efforts in the world," said Governor Jindal, a Republican.

The \$1 billion in funding was released following the announcement last week that President George W. Bush agreed to give Louisiana 30 years to pay its \$1.8 billion share of the cost of raising hurricane protection levees in the Greater New Orleans area.

Virtually all of the spending announced today is designed to advance federally authorized projects, including funds to expedite hurricane protection in New Orleans, devastated by the 2005 hurricanes Katrina and Rita and the subsequent levee failure that flooded much of the city.

"The projects include coastal restoration efforts that will provide the coastal buffer we need to improve our hurricane protection levees already under construction and funds to advance hurricane protection efforts in every coastal parish in our state," Governor Jindal said.

Environmentalists praised the spending plan. "We have always said that, in order to keep Louisiana safe, we need both to strengthen the levees we have now and restore the wetlands and coastal areas that serve as our natural hurricane barriers," said Paul Harrison, coastal Louisiana project manager for Environmental Defense Fund. "This new plan fulfills both of those priorities."

The funding includes \$130 million for the Greater New Orleans hurricane protection cost share

While the agreement reached with the White House would not require Louisiana to provide matching funds until 2011, this \$130 million investment will help expedite ongoing construction, which will help the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers meet the 2011 deadline, the governor said.

"This is financially prudent in that future surpluses are uncertain and will allow the state to help keep the Corps on schedule and continuing coastal development projects," Jindal said.

Each year, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers spends nearly \$200 million to dredge navigation channels in Louisiana. Nearly all of this sediment, that actually built Louisiana, is usually dumped into the deep waters of the Gulf of Mexico.

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The investment announced today will jumpstart the beneficial use of dredge material, which the governor said is one of the fastest and most effective investments the state can make to restore coastal areas.

In the last eight months, the state has nearly doubled the available sites to place this dredge material and create wetlands.



A coastal town built on Louisiana wetlands on Atchafalaya Bay (Photo by [Maitri](#))

Louisiana's 4,600 square miles of coastal wetlands are lost at the rate about 35 square miles annually, according to the U.S. Geological Survey.

To help reverse the rate of erosion, a sediment pipeline for restoration of Plaquemines, Jefferson and Lafourche parishes will be built with \$37 million of the funding announced today.

This dedicated pipeline will deliver land building materials to the three coastal parishes.

Once this project is completed, the state will move forward on similar projects on the Calcasieu River, Atchafalaya River into Terrebonne Parish and other areas in Plaquemines Parish on the Mississippi River.

The governor said \$70 million for shoreline restoration of Caminada Headlands and Barataria Basin to provide a buffer against storm surges in Jefferson and Lafourche parishes.

"This plan shows a substantial commitment to projects that will allow us to restore wetlands by using sediment that would otherwise have gone to waste," said Maura Wood, senior program manager of the Coastal Louisiana Restoration for the National Wildlife Federation. "These projects will restore the Mississippi River's capacity to build land and allow us to take advantage of storm protection provided by our natural resources."

Environmentalists also praised plans to restore barrier islands.

"The barrier islands act as a speed bump for storm surge and wave energy," said Paul Kemp, vice president of the Gulf Coast Initiative for the National Audubon Society. "Louisiana loses the equivalent of 32 football fields' worth of wetlands every day, and that includes many of our barrier islands. This leaves coastal communities vulnerable to the full wrath of hurricanes. The new funding will help us rebuild those speed bumps and bring back our first line of defense against storms."

The time for studies and research has long passed, Jindal said. "It is time to start breaking ground and digging dirt on these projects."

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Yet, the governor said the state will "make a robust investment in science and technology to provide solutions to our coastal restoration and protection challenges."

He said Louisiana is on the forefront of integrated coastal management innovations and is home to some of the best coastal scientists in the nation.

The \$1 billion in funding includes \$300 million the governor called for in his second special session of the legislature earlier this year, \$200 million in surplus funding from the 2007 legislative session, \$510 million from the Coastal Impact Assistance Program, \$83 million from the state trust fund/capital outlay and \$68 million from the Coastal Wetlands Planning Protection and Restoration Act.

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