



Everything New Orleans

The Times-Picayune

EDITORIAL: A \$1 billion effort

Monday, August 18, 2008

There are hardly more important goals for Louisiana's long-term future than rebuilding our coast and improving hurricane protection -- and it's heartening that state officials are committing serious money to those efforts.

▼ Advertisement

[CONTINUE STORY](#) ↓

Freed from the federal requirement to pay the state match of levee costs up front, the Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority last week put down \$300 million from the 2007 budget surplus for a host of flood protection projects.

The money includes \$100 million to speed up completion of 100-year levee protection in the New Orleans area, and residents are grateful for that commitment. It also includes money for Mississippi River diversion projects to rebuild wetlands in Plaquemines and St. John the Baptist parishes.

Combined with other previously approved expenditures, the state is now set to spend \$1 billion over the next four years to rebuild the coast and build levees. That's a formidable expense for our state, and most of the money will go to actual construction.

"The days and time of studies are behind us. We are officially today starting the process of turning dirt, starting construction," Gov. Bobby Jindal said after the authority's vote.

The state's money includes advance payments on its share of the cost for several federal restoration projects that have been authorized by Congress but have yet to be funded. The state's money will not have the desired impact until Congress approves those federal funds, and congressional leaders need to keep that in mind as they consider our state's ongoing needs.

Louisiana has only a few years to reverse coastal erosion before it is too late. Our state is putting money down to do its part -- and Congress needs to do the same.