



LOUISIANA WILDLIFE FEDERATION

"... conserving our natural resources and your right to enjoy them."

affiliated with



Res. No. 7C, 2010

SUBJECT: USE OF NATURAL WETLANDS FOR SEWAGE TREATMENT

WHEREAS, in recent years, many people in south Louisiana have been sensitized to the problems associated with our diminishing wetlands, and many types of wetland restoration projects and concepts are being tried and considered, and

WHEREAS, it is generally recognized that there are no easy solutions to the problems associated with wetland restoration, and that one such concept being tried is wastewater assimilation, which is the discharge of sewage into natural wetlands in order to complete the treatment process and to introduce nutrients and freshwater that are intended to enhance vegetative growth and eventually build up soil, and

WHEREAS, wastewater treatment by wetlands has been promoted and accepted as a beneficial process by some environmental groups and agencies, and

WHEREAS, there has been comparatively little critical analysis of wastewater treatment by wetlands with regard to the potential harmful effects of introducing excessive nutrients and too much water into a wetland, and

WHEREAS, the largest and most highly touted wastewater assimilation project in Louisiana is the City of Hammond's site in a 700-acre marsh in the Manchac wetlands just south of Ponchatoula that includes portions of the Joyce Wildlife Management Area, and

WHEREAS, within less than three years after the 4.1 million gallons-per-day of effluent discharge into this marsh began, the Hammond project has directly or indirectly caused the destruction of emergent vegetation and the creation of over four hundred acres of open water and altered much of the remaining areas of vegetation by replacing emergent vegetation which has extensive root systems with floating or invasive annuals that have little or no useful root systems for holding the soils together, and

WHEREAS, the proponents of wastewater treatment by wetlands attribute the destruction of this wetland solely to the consumption and destruction of vegetation by nutria, and

WHEREAS, critics of this type of wastewater treatment by wetlands attribute only minor impacts to nutria and the major impacts to excessive nutrient loads, other toxic constituents and a continuous discharge that prevents normal wet and dry cycles which are important to maintain healthy wetlands, and

WHEREAS, it is recognized that proper wastewater treatment is expensive and that the destruction and restoration of wetlands is also costly, and

WHEREAS, the win-win situation which was and is used to promote wastewater treatment by wetlands has been put into question by the apparent outcomes at the Hammond treatment site, and

(More)

WHEREAS, because having efficient, effective wastewater treatment AND conserving and restoring wetlands is in the public's interest there is a need for the public to know more about the efficacy of wastewater treatment by wetlands as a sewage treatment strategy, in particular with regard to the Hammond treatment site and the impacts to surrounding wetlands including the Joyce WMA, and

WHEREAS, pertinent environmental quality, conservation and other government regulatory agencies should be encouraged to participate in public discussions of wastewater treatment by wetlands as a sewage treatment and wetlands conservation strategy, and

WHEREAS, it is very difficult to restore wetlands once they have been lost, and it is incumbent on those who consider themselves good environmental stewards to familiarize themselves with the data used to evaluate wastewater treatment by wetlands projects.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Louisiana Wildlife Federation (LWF) urges caution in the development of sewage treatment systems that include wastewater treatment by wetlands as a component.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the LWF urges that the Louisiana Departments of Natural Resources and Health & Hospitals and the U. S. Army, Corps of Engineers independently evaluate the cumulative effects on receiving wetlands and that such evaluation include open discourse that considers the most current data regarding this strategy for wastewater treatment.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the LWF urges the managers of sewage treatment systems that employ wastewater treatment by wetlands to carefully monitor the receiving wetlands and make adjustments to the effluent as necessary to assure their (wetlands) long term health, and requests the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality to provide monitoring as necessary to insure compliance with permit limits.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the LWF supports the development of a statement of understanding that describes and explains the issues, the data and the various conclusions associated with both the concept and the projects referred to as wastewater treatment by wetlands.

Adopted by the Louisiana Wildlife Federation in convention assembled, February 28, 2010 at Cypress Bend Resort, Many, Louisiana