



LOUISIANA WILDLIFE FEDERATION

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

affiliated with



Resolution No. 19E, 2012

SUBJECT: A DELTA IN THE HAND IS WORTH TWO IN A PLAN

WHEREAS, an area approximately the size of the state of Delaware (1,883 square miles) has converted from emergent wetland to shallow open water in coastal Louisiana since the 1930s, which has reduced habitat quantity and quality for fish and wildlife, and

WHEREAS, the end of the Mississippi River is known as the Bird's Foot Delta because of its shape, and contains 521,000 acres (814 square miles) of freshwater and intermediate marshes, and

WHEREAS, 178,000 acres of Bird's Foot Delta are publicly owned, i.e., the state-owned Pass A Loutre Wildlife Management Area (115,000 acres) and the federally-owned Delta National Wildlife Refuge (49,000 acres) and navigable waterways (14,000 acres), with the remainder in private ownership, and

WHEREAS, people prevent all natural delta building processes of the Mississippi River except in the Wax Lake Outlet delta, some parts of the Atchafalaya River Delta, and some parts of the Bird's Foot Delta, and

WHEREAS, people have hastened the loss of emergent wetlands, slowed delta building, and forgone opportunities to allow the river to build new wetlands in the Bird's Foot Delta, and

WHEREAS, dozens of small-scale, sediment diversion projects in the Bird's Foot Delta each are creating wetlands at 3.2 to 11.6 acres/year on average, and

WHEREAS, from at least the 1970s to 2009, sediment dredged to maintain the navigation channel in the Mississippi River was dumped at the head of Pass A Loutre, and

WHEREAS, a sand bar began filling the head of Pass A Loutre in the 1980s, and by 2010, Pass A Loutre carried so little freshwater and sediment that its northern mouth was no longer usable for navigation as a route to the Gulf and was so shallow that people could walk across it, and its southern mouth no longer existed, and

WHEREAS, the reduction in sediment carried by Pass A Loutre has reduced, and will continue to reduce, sediment available for natural delta building processes, as well as at restoration projects that are sediment diversions, in Pass A Loutre WMA, and

(more)

WHEREAS, future sediment diversions are in doubt because the Coastal Wetlands Planning, Protection and Restoration Act Task Force decided in 2010 to use restoration funds to close the West Bay Sediment Diversion project in the Bird's Foot Delta and decided in 2011 to discontinue plans for the three most imminent sediment diversion projects from the Mississippi River (Benny's Bay Sediment Diversion, Fort Jackson Sediment Diversion, and Delta Building Diversion North of Fort St. Phillip) because of the expense of dredging to maintain navigation in the Mississippi River downstream of those sediment diversion projects.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Louisiana Wildlife Federation recommends that the State of Louisiana and the US Army Corps of Engineers take actions that protect the wetland building and wetland sustaining capacity of the Bird's Foot Delta until construction has begun further upstream on large, sediment diversions that will be operated throughout their natural lives. Examples of beneficial actions in the Bird's Foot Delta include channel dredging to reverse navigation-induced restrictions on freshwater and sediment capacity in Pass A Loutre, and constructing sediment diversions throughout the most suitable locations in the Bird's Foot delta.

Adopted by the Louisiana Wildlife Federation in Convention Assembled, March 11, 2012 in Covington, Louisiana.

The Louisiana Wildlife Federation is a statewide conservation education and advocacy organization with more than 10,000 members and 26 affiliate groups. Established in 1940, it is affiliated with the National Wildlife Federation and represents a broad constituency of conservationists including hunters, fishers, campers, birders, boaters, and other outdoor enthusiasts.