



# Let's do it right! Restore the wetlands. Protect the people.

June/July 2009

MRGO Closure and Ecosystem Restoration Update

## Community Rallies for Restoration

On the first day of Hurricane Season, nearly 150 people from New Orleans and St. Bernard Parish gathered at the levee along the Central Wetlands in the Lower 9th Ward to ask the Army Corps of Engineers to make restoration of the wetlands destroyed by the Mississippi River Gulf Outlet a top priority. Saltwater intrusion from the MRGO, a deep draft shipping channel, led to the decimation of tens of thousands of acres of protective wetlands.

In 2007, the U.S. Congress called on the Corps to have a plan for the MRGO ecosystem restoration by May of 2008 (see timeline below and closure update on page 2). With no plan in place and an ever-slipping deadline, the community united to call for action. Elected officials from New Orleans and St. Bernard Parish recognized the urgency and importance of wetland restoration to the future of their communities.

"Yes, levees can be built. Yes, pumps can have backup generators. But the sustainable solution is to restore our wetlands," said Cynthia Willard-Lewis, New Orleans Councilmember District E.

**Don't Miss This:** Check out this short video about the rally <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=puPWXYMJcqQ>

Take action & be heard! Visit [www.MRGOmustGO.org](http://www.MRGOmustGO.org) and send an email to the Army Corps and President Obama.



Students at the MLK Charter School in the Lower 9th Ward make their mark on the coastal banner. Students worked on the banner after hearing John Taylor's "Bayou Stories" at the Central Wetlands platform.

## Coastal Banner En Route to Washington: Hundreds of Handprints Send the Message

A 60+ foot coastal banner is traveling throughout southeast Louisiana with the message, "Our Coast. Our Future. Restore the Wetlands." Thus far, the banner bears the colorful handprints of over 600 children from Louisiana and will continue collecting prints until it is delivered to Washington, DC in late September.

The banner will be displayed near the Capitol at a public concert featuring Louisiana musicians Tab Benoit, Cyril Neville, and Anders Osbourne.

Please contact Amanda Moore at [MooreA@nwf.org](mailto:MooreA@nwf.org) if you'd like more information on getting your students involved in the project.



Top: GRN's Executive Director, Cyn Sarthou shows support. Above: Community leader Pam Dashiell rallies the crowd.

### Upcoming Events:

#### 6/19: Rally for the Climate and Coastal Restoration—Noon

Congressman Cao's office  
4640 S. Carrollton Ave,  
New Orleans, Contact Jordan.Macha@sierraclub.org

#### 7/3: Episode 2: Category 5 Wetlands Watch—WLAE PBS

8:00pm Episode 1 also available online at [www.categoryfivewetlandswatch.org](http://www.categoryfivewetlandswatch.org)

#### 7/16: 2009 Flood Protection Symposium:

New Orleans, Contact Ed Picou at [epicou@bellsouth.net](mailto:epicou@bellsouth.net)

#### 7/30: Deadline for Submissions:

2nd Annual Protect Our Wetlands, Protect Ourselves Environmental Video Competition—visit [www.healthygulf.org](http://www.healthygulf.org)

#### Stay Tuned!

**August: Hunter/Angler Global Warming workshop**—Houma, Learn how climate change impacts Louisiana coastal traditions and how to make a difference. Contact [PulaskiC@nwf.org](mailto:PulaskiC@nwf.org)

#### 9/24: Capitol Hill concert to spread awareness about Coastal LA

—Washington, DC, Tab Benoit and other Voice of the Wetlands All-stars—FREE! Contact [MooreA@nwf.org](mailto:MooreA@nwf.org)

## MRGO Ecosystem Restoration Timeline — Behind Schedule





**CAWIC**



## As the MRGO Rock Dam Nears Completion, Restoration Takes Center Stage

The MRGO was closed to all navigation on Earth Day, April 22nd. As of early June, the MRGO rock dam at Bayou La Loutre had emerged above water across the entire length of the channel (nearly 1000 feet wide) and the MRGO is officially closed from the Gulf of Mexico at Bayou La Loutre. The dam is expected to be completed in July, rising several feet out of the water and spanning 12 feet wide at the top and 450 feet wide at the bottom of the channel.



As we know, the closure is the first step toward restoration along the MRGO. Reintroducing freshwater to sustain a healthy wetland ecosystem, shoreline protection, marsh creation, and rebuilding lost wildlife habitat like land ridges are among the projects for the MRGO restoration.

The challenge ahead of us is the timely and quality restoration of the MRGO ecosystem—tens of thousands of acres of protective wetlands that must be restored to ensure public safety and a sustainable community in the Greater New Orleans area. Despite the Congressional deadline of May 2008, the Army Corps aims for a March 2011 completion of the MRGO Ecosystem Restoration Plan. The Corps admits that adhering to this timeline is not guaranteed. However, there are ways to expedite review processes and ensure that all resources are available and used for this project—a project that should be top priority for the Army Corps.

**You can help move the MRGO ecosystem restoration forward by making sure our elected officials and the Army Corps know that the project must be a top priority. Make your voice heard by attending community events and visiting [www.MRGOmustGO.org](http://www.MRGOmustGO.org) to send a personalized email to decision makers.**

Tab Benoit helped kick-off the children's coastal restoration banner project.

Tab will be one of the Louisiana musicians playing a free concert in Washington, DC this fall to raise awareness for coastal Louisiana.



### MRGO Website: New & Improved!

Check out the new look & updated information. Explore the site and **take action!**

### Need a Yard Sign? Bumper Sticker?

Contact Amanda at [MooreA@nwf.org](mailto:MooreA@nwf.org)

### Special Thanks!

*Thanks to the folks that helped to make the Rally for Restoration a success, including:*  
New Orleans City Council Vice President, Jacquelyn Clarkson  
St. Bernard Parish President, Craig Taffaro  
New Orleans City Councilmember, Cynthia Willard-Lewis  
Lower 9th CSED director, Pamela Dashiell  
Global Green New Orleans Director, Beth Galante

Solar power provided by Gulf South Solar  
PA system provided by Gulf Restoration Network  
Rally documentary by Nebula Multimedia

**Together, we can restore our coast and protect our communities!  
THE TIME IS NOW.**

Visit [www.MRGOmustGO.org](http://www.MRGOmustGO.org) to Learn More and Take Action

Or Contact Amanda Moore, National Wildlife Federation at 225-229-1944  
[MooreA@nwf.org](mailto:MooreA@nwf.org), 716 Adams Street, NOLA