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

www.MRGOmustGO.org

September/October 2009 MRGO Closure and Ecosystem Restoration Update

St. Bernard Parish Talks Restoration

Over 100 people turned out to a Tuesday night community forum in Chalmette that focused on wetland restoration along the Mississippi River Gulf Outlet. Residents of Chalmette and surrounding communities enjoyed a jambalaya dinner and heard from an expert panel including St. Bernard Parish historians, the Army Corps, the levee board, and a scientist with the Lake Pontchartrain Basin Foundation. The speakers emphasized the importance of wetland restoration along the MRGO to community sustainability and protection from storm surge.

St. Bernard citizen, Catherine Sherpas, called for urgent action to restore and sustain the coast.

Residents asked the panelists questions and shared their own ideas for restoration. The event, sponsored by the MRGO Must Go Coalition, aimed to increase public awareness about the need for restoration as well as increase the communication between the community and those who are working on the plan for the MRGO wetlands.

Check out this short video recapping the forum:
http://vimeo.com/6144858

MRGO Media Tour Marks 4th Anniversary of Hurricane Katrina

Three days before the 4th anniversary of Hurricane Katrina, the MRGO Must GO Coalition urged the Army Corps to honor President Obama's priority of coastal restoration.

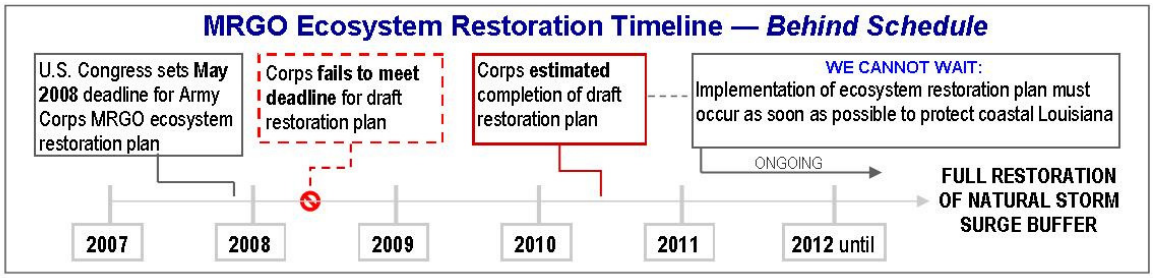
Members of the MRGO Must Go Coalition delivered this message during a news conference, airplane and van media tour to show the slow progress in restoring wetlands east of New Orleans along the Mississippi River Gulf Outlet (MRGO) to protect the Lower 9th Ward and St. Bernard Parish.

"The more vulnerable coastal communities are to hurricane damage, the more it costs the federal government—and taxpayers—to help those communities recover after the storm," said Pam Dashiell, co-director of the Lower 9th Ward Center for Sustainable Engagement and Development.

"The Corps should do everything it possibly can to expedite design and construction of critical restoration projects. The importance of keeping the Corps engaged in our protection cannot be underestimated," said Craig Taffaro, president of St. Bernard Parish.

Lower 9th Ward leader, Pam Dashiell, spoke to the media from Bayou Bienvenue platform.

Leaders from Orleans and St. Bernard Parishes led the three-hour tour for both national and local media outlets, including CNN, *The New York Times*, and *The Times Picayune*. Here are a few links to coverage: http://www.nola.com/politics/index.ssf/2009/08/wetlands_restoration_near_clos.html
http://www.southernstudies.org/2009/08/army-corps-urged-to-honor-obamas-priority-of-restoring-new-orleans-area-wetlands.html



Upcoming Events:

9/21: Children's Coastal Banner Media Conference: Steps of State Capitol in Baton Rouge, contact Amanda at MooreA@nwf.org

9/26: LEAN Annual Meeting: Lod Cook Alumni Center, LSU Campus Baton Rouge, contact 225-928-1315

9/28: **St. Bernard Town Hall**: speaker Robert Turner, Reg. Director of Southeast LA Flood Protection Authority-East, contact Alberta at Alberta @sebastopolplantation.com

10/9-11: Voice of the Wetlands Festival: Southdown Plantation Grounds, Houma, contact Christina @voiceofthewetlands.org

10/17: Wild Things Festival: Southeast Louisiana Refuges, Lacombe, contact US Fish and Wildlife at 985-882-2000

11/8-9: The Green Rebuilding of New Orleans: Doubletree Hotel, downtown New Orleans, contact Jennifer at jennifer.grosso@sierraclub.org

Check out the latest episode of Category Five Wetlands Watch at: www.categoryfivewetlandswatch.org

Update on MRGO Ecosystem Restoration Planning

The Army Corps MRGO Ecosystem Restoration team is currently working on the selection of their "Tentatively Selected Plan" for restoration of the destroyed ecosystem along the MRGO. The Corps timeline, which puts plan completion in March of 2011, is one month behind schedule at this point.

With new sea level rise guidelines and the need for accurate and quality data, the MRGO Must Go coalition aims to ensure that the plan is not only completed in a timely manner, but also with attention to detail and accuracy.

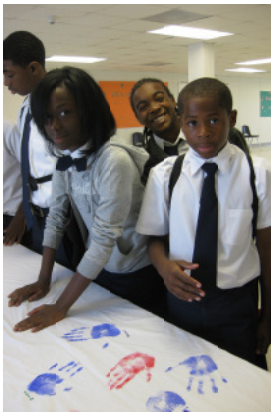
The MRGO Must Go Coalition submitted a letter to top Corps officials in early August addressing concerns with the ecosystem restoration plan and we await a response. Stay tuned! Visit **www.MRGOmustGO.org** for more information and to share your voice with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and President Obama.

Children's Coastal Louisiana Banner to stop at State Capitol before presentation to U.S. Congress

A traveling coastal restoration banner that bears the colorful handprints of approximately 1,000 children from southern Louisiana will be presented to the Governor's Office of Coastal Affairs at a news conference on the steps of the State Capitol on Monday, September 21st. The banner project was funded by the MRGO Must Go Coalition to help raise awareness for the importance of wetland restoration to the safety and sustainability of coastal Louisiana.

The following day, the banner will arrive in Washington, DC for presentation at a congressional briefing on coastal Louisiana solutions. The banner is roughly 10'x 30' and reads, "Restore The Wetlands: Our Coast, Our Future." George Washington Carver Elementary School and Martin Luther King, Jr. Charter School in New Orleans were two of the schools that participated in the creation of the banner and students will present the banner at the news conference.

Check out MRGO Must Go's Facebook page and website for pictures after the event!



Students at GW Carver Elementary work on the banner

Late August afternoon in the cypress swamp at Jean Lafitte National Park

Need a Yard Sign? Bumper Sticker?

Contact Amanda at MooreA@nwf.org or log onto **www.MRGOmustGO.org**

Special Thanks!

Thanks to the folks that dedicated their time and energy to the Chalmette forum and media tour, including:

St. Bernard Parish President, **Craig Taffaro**
Lower 9th CSED director, **Charles Allen**
NUNEZ Associate Professor of History, **Ron Chapman**
Lower 9th CSED director, **Pamela Dashiell**
Southeast LA Flood Protection Authority President, **Timothy Doody**
Lake Pontchartrain Basin Foundation (former) Exec. Director, **Carlton Dufrechou**
St. Bernard Chief Administration Officer, **Col. David Dysart**
St. Bernard Sewage and Water Board Operator, **Jacob Groby**
St. Bernard Parish Historian, **William Hyland**
CAWIC Director and Holy Cross resident, **John Koeferl**
Lake Pontchartrain Basin Foundation Scientist, **John Lopez**
St. Bernard Coastal Zone Administrator, **William McCartney**
Army Corps of Engineers Sr. Project Manager, **Greg Miller**

Many thanks to Chris Dier of Chalmette, Summer Intern for MRGO Must GO

TOGETHER, WE CAN RESTORE OUR COAST AND PROTECT OUR COMMUNITIES!

THE TIME IS NOW.

Visit www.MRGOmustGO.org to Learn More and Take Action

Or Contact Amanda Moore, National Wildlife Federation at 225-229-1944 MooreA@nwf.org, 716 Adams Street NOLA