

## Louisiana Coastal Ecosystem

**For more information, contact:**

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Louisiana's coast and its degradation and restoration are major environmental issues being studied at the National Wetlands Research Center. Coastal ecosystems are vulnerable because of the tremendous amount of human activity that takes place along the coast. Information on ecological processes is essential to guide the development along the coast as well as to protect and restore wildlife habitat.

Louisiana has about 40% of coastal wetlands in the lower 48 states; they support fish, waterfowl, and fur-bearing animals as well as unique cultures like that of the Acadians. The fish and wildlife resources of Louisiana's coast produce over \$1 billion each year in revenues.

But Louisiana has the highest coastal loss rate because of natural and human causes. Over the past three decades, Louisiana has lost as much as 35-40 mi<sup>2</sup> (90-104 km<sup>2</sup>) of coastal wetlands a year.

The National Wetlands Research Center is qualified to assess and monitor this ecosystem because of its proximity

to the study area, a staff chosen for their expertise in the system, and a number of established partnerships with others who study the areas. The Center is often the lead group in partnerships with universities, other federal agencies, and private entities who study this ecosystem.

Most of the Center's research and

technology development performed for coastal wetlands are done at the Lafayette headquarters; some work is performed at the National Wetlands Research Center's project office in Baton Rouge, LA.

Some current projects at NWRC:

- Understanding why Louisiana coastal wetlands are being lost at such a high rate
- Studying functions, values, and restoration methods of Louisiana coastal wetlands
- Assessing population biology and habitat needs of trust species (migratory birds, endangered species)
- Studying coastal erosion and the functions and values of coastal habitats in providing productive biological systems for the economy and recreation
- Providing technical assistance and information to task forces and leading the monitoring associated with the Coastal Wetlands Planning, Protection, and Restoration Act

- Looking into ways to restore coastal upland habitats
- Understanding human impacts on function and value of habitat for trust species
- Developing technological tools to assist in the assessment and preservation of the ecosystem and transferring that technology to appropriate audiences
- Providing resources and professional support for researchers and users of biological information; ensuring that the information is provided in the most usable format for a variety of audiences such as decision- and policy-makers and the general public.

