

Implementing the Plan would begin restoring the Mississippi River in Plaquemines Parish to its pre-1970 state by rebuilding the river bank at Fort St. Philip and Mardi Gras Pass. These two, unrepaired crevasses have flooded lower Breton Sound with freshwater and virtually destroyed the major portion of the Louisiana oyster fishery which was located there.

These two crevasses and other changes in the Breton Sound expose southeastern Louisiana, and New Orleans, to the increasingly powerful storms and hurricanes predicted to accompany global warming. Wetlands reduce storm surge levels; but, only at the rate of about one foot reduction for each 2 miles of wetland.^{[1][2]} As most people living in the Mississippi River Valley know, levees are preferred over wetlands for preventing floods. The Plan recognizes that restoring most of the River's flow would undo a hundred years of effort to control its flow.

The Oyster Plan promotes the use of levees rather than wetlands for storm protection. The Plan suggests using a series of levees to control freshwater flow and capture sediment in the entire Lake Pontchartrain Basin, including Breton Sound. The levees will also serve the double purpose of controlling fresh and brackish water flows for building protected wetlands and for the rehabilitation and expansion of the oyster industry. The Plan combines storm surge protection with oyster industry expansion.

Diversions should be redesigned to capture the freshwater and sediment behind levees as occurs in natural surge-reservoirs. The levees will limit the destruction caused by the freshwater floods and will protect the newly-building land from erosion by wind and wave. We will have immediate increases in storm surge protection from the levees. Controlling the freshwater will give our oyster industry a chance for survival.

My hope is that the Oyster Task Force will adopt a version of this plan and "sell" it to the people of Louisiana and their representatives at the local, Parish, State, and Federal levels.

^[1] US Army COE (1963) Interim survey report, Morgan City, Louisiana and vicinity, Serial no. 63. US Army Engineer District, New Orleans, LA.

^[2] The Value of Wetlands in Protecting Southeast Louisiana from Hurricane Storm Surges. Edward B. Barbier, Ioannis Y. Georgiou, Brian Enchelmeyer, Denise J. Reed. <https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0058715>