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Environmentalists say coal getting into -- and in the way of -- wetlands project, FOX 8 reports

map-barataria-diversion.jpg

The proposed Mid-Barataria Sediment Diversion project could protect and rebuild coastal wetlands on the west bank of Plaquemines Parish, but is threatened by high costs, and, according to environmentalists interviewed by WVUE-TV, pollution from a coal export facility that is trying to expand.

Andy Grimm, NOLA.com | Times-Picayune By **Andy Grimm, NOLA.com | Times-Picayune**

Email the author | Follow on Twitter

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Environmentalists say that **coal and coal by-products from an export facility near the site are getting into wetlands** from the Mid-Barataria Sediment Diversion project in Plaquemines Parish, and they are voicing opposition to plans to expand the terminal, WVUE FOX 8 News reported Saturday.

A dredging project has built several hundred acres of land along the west bank of Plaquemines Parish, but along with the silt, environmentalists are finding chunks of coal and a by-product called petroleum coke.

"This isn't ever supposed to be here," Scott Eustis, Coastal Wetland Specialist for the Gulf Restoration Network, told the TV station as he held up a chunk of coal. "Everywhere we go when we walk through the coastal restoration project, there's these dice- and golf ball-sized pieces."

Plans by Ram Terminals to build yet another facility in the area would create another source of the pollutants, according to the TV station. It also would slow the flow of fresh water and silt into the area, allowing saltwater to eat into the coastal gains. The project also is threatened by ballooning costs which have caused the state to put the Mid-Barataria Diversion work on hold.

Watch and read the full FOX 8 story **here**.

CORRECTION: A previous version of this story stated that a Ram Terminals facility was considered a likely source of coal and petroleum coke found in coastal wetlands in Plaquemines Parish. That facility has not yet been built.

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