

WAVE MAKERS NEWS

POLLUTING LOUISIANA'S LAST HOPE?

After years of examining data, running computations, public comments, and conflict resolution, the Final 2012 Master Plan for restoring Louisiana's coast has been issued. Use of the Mississippi River to build sheltering wetlands is a core strategy of the Plan. The Master Plan is Louisiana's Hail Mary pass, our imperfect, best, last shot at turning the tide of our coastal crisis.

The Master Plan already faces great challenges. As the United States moves away from burning coal, more of this dirty fuel is exported to China, Chile, and other countries with lower standards, and coal piles at shipping terminals in Plaquemines Parish, Louisiana have grown into mountains. RAM Terminals, LLC, is threatening to place another mountain of coal adjacent to and just upstream from the mouth of the Myrtle Grove sediment diversion – one of the premier



Mountain of Coal at International Marine Terminals, downriver from the Myrtle Grove Marina.

land-building projects in the Master Plan.

After a long history as the sewer for two-thirds of the United States, the Mississippi is already thoroughly polluted. Louisiana urgently needs

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SUNWEST HARBOURTOWNE MEGA-CHANNEL STALLED

For years, Pasco County, Florida and a company called SunWest Acquisitions have been pushing for a 4 mile mega-channel through the intact coastal ecosystem of Fillman's Bayou on the Nature Coast. On May 16th, the Army Corps of Engineers, responding to pressure from GRN and citizen activists, issued a challenge to the permit for this destructive mega-channel. In their letter, the Corps stated that they'll be recommending denial of the permit in 30 days unless the channel size is reduced and the amount of seagrass mitigation is sharply increased. Mitigation is the building, preservation or restoration of seagrass beds elsewhere to help make up for those destroyed by a project.

This proposed 62 feet wide and 4.86 miles long channel is meant to be shared by boaters

launching from a future county park and residents of a future luxury development called SunWest Harbortowne. The Corps proposed a channel width reduction to 45-50 feet, suggesting that additional mitigation acreage could be found in Hernando, Pinellas or Hillsborough counties. This offsite mitigation in other counties is no comfort to the folks who reside near the proposed destruction, and the Gulf fish and marine mammals dependent on these coastal seagrass beds. It's common knowledge among local residents and boaters that manatees are foraging, mating and birthing in Fillman's Bayou. Will these manatees care if the developers attempt, perhaps unsuccessfully, to create seagrass beds in the next county over?

In a March 2011 report, the Florida Department

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UNBRIDLED FRACKING IN MISSISSIPPI

In a May presentation, Jamie Crawford of the Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) revealed that oil and gas drilling operations involving hydraulic fracturing or “fracking” in southwest Mississippi are apparently proceeding in the absence of needed information on surface water resources. MDEQ has also yet to publish comprehensive rules on water use in fracking. Production companies need about a million gallons per day of fresh water from wells, rivers or ponds to fracture shale formations below 10,000 feet, and MDEQ is permitting water withdrawals from public streams without adequately measuring the quantity of water available.

Fracking combines directional drilling technology and ultra-high-pressure pumps to complete wells by forcing water, petroleum solvents and sand down the well to fracture shale formations and produce oil or gas. Permitted water withdrawals from the Amite River and other streams are ongoing; drilling operators are even buying pond water from landowners and trucking it to the well sites. Once used, the polluted water cannot be released back into streams but must be trucked away for treatment or injection into disposal wells.

Also, if well casings are improperly cemented and poorly sealed in the upper sections, fracking fluids can invade and pollute drinking water aquifers. This has been a major concern in other parts of the U.S. The vast majority of people in Southwest Mississippi are vulnerable to this threat because they drink well water from aquifers. Despite a lack of comprehensive rules or permits, MDEQ is granting companies temporary letters of authorization to proceed. MDEQ is lagging behind in regulating water use in fracking even as the drilling activity increases in



Shale rock natural gas drilling rig in Pennsylvania. Photo courtesy of Ruhrfish.

Wilkinson, Amite and Pike Counties. It needs to act soon and decisively to regulate surface water use and to protect drinking water. ☐

POLLUTING LOUISIANA'S LAST HOPE? (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

to put this river to work moving sediment and building wetlands for the sake of the people and infrastructure on the Gulf Coast, but a river burdened with acidic coal runoff is less likely to build healthy wetlands. Coal runoff has heavy metals, sulfides, and other toxics that will impair the health of the existing marshes and compromise the habitat value of whatever wetlands the restoration project builds.

If that weren't enough, the dust that blows from the coal piles can cover boats in black, and coat people's lungs with - leading to diseases of the heart, lung, and kidneys. This coal dust is a threat to the health of the people in nearby

communities like Ironton and Myrtle Grove; the runoff is a threat to the health of all of us on the coast sheltered from storms by healthy wetlands, and the carbon from China's power plants and iron smelters, put into the upper atmosphere, will only accelerate climate change and cause our swollen Gulf of Mexico to rise higher and faster.

We in Louisiana need you to tell the Army Corps and state agencies that they cannot fail the public by allowing the premier coastal restoration project, the Myrtle Grove sediment diversion, to be polluted with coal runoff. [Click here to take action.](#) ☐

AVEDA EARTH MONTH A GREAT SUCCESS

This April, Aveda salons across the Gulf raised money and awareness for GRN's Healthy Waters work. More than 200 salons partnered with GRN, many of whom held fashion shows, walks, and galas to advocate for clean water. We are honored to have Aveda partner with us for Earth Month, and GRN thanks all the participating salons and staff for their hard work and dedication to protecting the health of our Gulf waters. 📍



Aveda Institute Houston hosted a "Pedal for water" fundraiser on 12 person bicycles!



Model showcases local designers at the Catwalk for Water in the Metropolitan, New Orleans.

CITIZENS GRAVELY CONCERNED OVER TARMAC MINE

In response to the recent release of a draft Environmental Impact Statement on a proposed mine site in Levy County, Florida, approximately one hundred citizens attended a public hearing held by the Army Corps of Engineers on May 31st in Inglis. Over 30 of these citizens stood up to express grave concerns about the effects the deep rock mining operations would have on their lives and their communities, from blasting and traffic to panther and black bear habitat damage. But the central theme of their testimony was the water under their feet and all around them. Levy County is built on karst, a swiss cheese of limestone caves through which Florida's groundwater flows, creating crystal clear springs and rivers. Additionally, the mining company's preferred alternative would include damage of up to 3,000 acres of wetlands. The Corps is accepting written comments via www.kingroadeis.com through July 11th. 📍



Citizens at public hearing on Tarmac Mine.

ANNOUNCING – AN EVENING FOR FLORIDA'S WATERS

Gulf Restoration Network will be participating in an upcoming event hosted by Governor Bob Graham and the Florida Conservation Coalition, to call for the protection of Florida's springs, rivers, and lakes on June 23rd at Silver River State Park. Event details are available at:

<http://floridaconservationcoalition.org/item/299642>

SUNWEST HARBOURTOWNE MEGA-CHANNEL STALLED (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

of Environmental Protection (FDEP) estimated that Florida's coastal seagrass contributed \$40 billion to the state's ecological services. Further, FDEP estimates that Florida coastal seagrass acreage dropped from 5 million acres in the 1950s, to 2.7 million acres in 2000, with another loss of half a million acres in the last 10 years. Without seagrass, there are fewer nurseries for fish and shellfish, and less food for manatees, creating a huge economic and ecosystem loss for Florida.

National Marine Fisheries Service has stayed firm in its criticism of the applicants' mitigation strategy, saying the efforts would have a "fairly high chance of failure." Pasco County Commissioner Jack Mariano continues to talk about a new route for the channel that is less damaging to dense seagrass beds. However, according to the map the county submitted, this route appears to be the same as that used for the 2011 permit application.



Seagrass beds in Fillman's Bayou. Photo courtesy of Pasco County.

GRN continues to lead the charge to stop this destructive channel and support the public interest. A response from the applicants to the Corps' letter is expected this month. ■

THREATS TO MISSISSIPPI'S ISLANDS

Mississippi's barrier islands are truly special places, and you don't have to just take our word for it. In 1971, Congress designated several islands along Mississippi and Florida's coasts as Gulf Islands National Seashore, a national park, and later offered further protections for Mississippi's Horn and Petit Bois Islands as wilderness areas. These two islands are some of the last, undeveloped barrier islands in the United States. Sadly, these iconic islands also face more than their fair share of threats.



Weathered tar mats on Ship Island.

On a recent trip to Ship Island, GRN's Jonathan Henderson and Raleigh Hoke observed families enjoying the beach, birds flying along the shore, and hermit crabs scuttling along the water's edge on the south side of the island, but we also saw extensive evidence of BP's oil on the north side. Jonathan, who has been on over one hundred monitoring trips in the Gulf, said that he "was quite taken aback by what we found – hundreds of yards of highly weathered tar mats and tar balls."

Even as BP's impacts continue, the state of Mississippi is attempting to open up areas within a mile of the islands to oil and gas drilling – which will lead to more pipelines, pollution and industrial traffic, and a greater threat of catastrophes like the BP disaster. There are certain beautiful, natural treasures that deserve some extra protection from industrial development and pollution, and Gulf Islands National Seashore is one of them. We'll continue to work to ensure it receives the protections it deserves. ■