

# TUWaterWays

Water News and More from the Tulane Institute on Water Resources Law and Policy

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## **“The Louisiana Coast: Last Call” Series on Public Radio**

New Orleans NPR station WWNO is broadcasting a [series](#) of reports by Bob Marshall examining the past, present, and future of Louisiana’s coast. More than a series of discrete installments, the stories combine to give a picture of what the Louisiana coast is, how it has been impacted by development over the past century, where efforts today stand, and what the prospects are for the future. The series interviews a number of friends of the Institute and will include a discussion at Loyola University on Wednesday, May 22.

With an article about Mississippi River management, Marshall has also turned his attention upstream. The [article](#), which extensively quotes Institute Director Mark Davis, examines the need for reimagined, integrated management of the Mississippi River. Without upstream cooperation, all plans for restoration of the Delta are at risk, and without restoration of the Delta, all of the benefits of the river enjoyed upstream are at risk.

## **In a New Context: Mark Hertsgaard’s Too Well Earned Reflections on New Orleans**

We send out our best wishes to journalist Mark Hertsgaard, who has written about [climate change](#), coastal Louisiana and the Deep Water Horizon spill was shot in the calf at the Mother’s Day second line parade in New Orleans’s Seventh Ward. However, Hertsgaard hasn’t let the incident sour him on the city. In fact, in an [article](#) in The Nation, he offers an excellent summary of the importance of the city and, in turn, the wetlands that protect it:

It is an unalterable geographic fact that New Orleans sits at the mouth of the North American continent’s largest, most economically productive river system, the Mississippi. Thus it comes as no surprise that New Orleans is America’s number-one port. Without a functioning New Orleans, America’s status as the world’s leading agricultural superpower would be in jeopardy, as farmers in the Midwest would lose their main route of export. Likewise, as much as 90 percent of the oil and natural gas consumed and exported by the United States passes through New Orleans. The Louisiana Gulf coast also accounts for roughly one-third of all seafood Americans eat. The article goes on to make a more emotional plea for the city, as well, but the quoted paragraph is a perfect summation of what movements like [Big River Works](#) and [America’s Watershed Initiative](#) have been trying to convey up and down the Mississippi.

Our best wishes also go to all others affected by that senseless tragedy as well.

## **Lake Pontchartrain Basin Foundation Building Marsh at Mouth of Bayou St. John**

Bayou St. John, that finger of water off of Lake Pontchartrain that reaches into the heart of New Orleans and is part of the reason for the city’s location in the first place, is being reconnected to the lake, and LPBF is [spearheading an effort](#) to build marshes from the materials being dredged at the mouth of the Bayou. Those marshes would provide wildlife habitat where the Lafitte Corridor meets the open Lake.

## **New Orleans Drainage Fee in Development**

The New Orleans Sewerage and Water Board is [investigating](#) adding a drainage fee to pay for the estimated \$356 million in drainage projects that are in its future. The SWB

has contracted with a consulting firm to develop the user fee. The fee would cover operational costs and capital expenses for federal drainage projects. However, drainage in New Orleans is more complicated than in other places. As discussed at the GNOF Urban Water Series last week (that featured Institute Director Mark Davis), the famed New Orleans “bowl” is a [man-made consequence](#) of drainage management.

### **NFWF Sets up Gulf Coast Restoration Fund**

The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, a nonprofit set up by Congress, [announced](#) that the Gulf Environmental Benefit Fund has been opened. The fund is made of monies from BP’s and Transocean’s criminal plea agreements the parties reached with the Federal Government last year. The fund will ultimately be \$2.5 billion – half of which will be spent in Louisiana on barrier island restoration and freshwater diversions. However, implementation of these funds will be complicated. Projects funded by NFWF will have to be coordinated with NRDA projects to avoid losing those (yet to be determined) funds.

### **WRDA Passes Senate, but a House WRDA Bill is no Guarantee**

The Senate passed its WRDA bill on Wednesday, May 15, by an [83-14 vote](#). The [final bill](#) did not include Sen. Landrieu’s (D-La.) flood insurance amendment, Sen. Udall’s (D-NM.) amendment to mitigate the environmental [“streamlining provisions”](#) that upset many in the environmental community, nor any way to address or fund the backlog of Corps of Engineer projects . What it did include were coastal restoration projects in the Gulf of Mexico and the Everglades, a Mississippi River Basin infrastructure study, and an increase of use of Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund monies on harbor improvements.