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Southeast News

Army Engineers Recommend \$1.2 Billion Plan for Mississippi Coast

September 23, 2009

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An Army Corps of Engineers' report is recommending a \$1.2 billion coastal restoration plan for Mississippi.

William Walker, director of the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources, called this a "significant step" in post-Hurricane Katrina efforts to restore barrier islands and do other coastal projects.

So far, Congress has approved \$439 million for the program, but Walker is hopeful additional federal appropriations will follow.

"There is a lot of pieces to this thing, and it is quite expensive, and it is going to take awhile," he said.

Already, there's been work along the coast under an interim, \$107 million plan. Projects covered under that have included rebuilding a seawall; clearing canals of debris and bridge work, he said.

Key areas of focus under the larger plan, he said, are preserving fish and wildlife and addressing ways to reduce hurricane and storm damage, salt water intrusion and shoreline erosion.

"It is really unfolding rather nicely," Walker said.

"It has taken a long time, but we are in really good shape right now in terms of being able to restore the barrier islands and the coastal wetlands."

Raleigh Hoke, a spokesman for the environmental organization Gulf Restoration Network, said the effort is a "pretty well thought-out plan."

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