



Wave Maker's News

Volume V Issue I

March 2010

Inside this issue:

Wetlands Near MR-GO Again Threatened 2

Citizens Speak Out Against Kemper Coal 2

Aveda Earth Month 3

Protection for Mississippi's Outstanding Waters 4

Is Cleaner Water in Florida's Future?

Florida is in the middle of a clean water crisis. After years of delay and inaction, it is clearer than ever to Floridians that the current policies the state of Florida has to keep our waters clean are simply not working. This was powerfully exemplified by the "D+" grade that the state of Florida received from the Gulf Restoration Network's "Clean Up Your Act! Gulf States Report Card" last year. Florida's lakes, rivers, streams, springs, and estuaries are dying a slow death from overwhelming amounts of nitrogen and phosphorus pollution. The current situation cannot continue.



Algal Bloom in Florida Community

Courtesy of Dr. Gerry Pinto

After years of inaction on the part of the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, a coalition of Florida conservation groups sued the U.S. EPA to force them to step in to protect Florida waters. Now U.S. EPA is considering proposed draft rules with specific numeric standards and benchmarks to protect our rivers, springs, and estuaries from algal blooms and the nitrogen and phosphorus pollution that cause them.

What is at stake in this effort? Florida's tourism industry is directly dependant on Florida having

clean, healthy waters. Our state's recreational and commercial fishing industries depend on clean water. Our way of life as Floridians, focused on using our lakes and rivers as well as our beaches, depends on clean water. Algal blooms, red tides, beach closures, fish kills, and unsafe drinking water all are the results of unchecked and poorly regulated nitrogen and phosphorus pollution. This pollution comes from agricultural and development runoff, as well as sewage treatment plants, and impacts almost every waterbody in Florida, and in particular Florida's springs.

Continued on page 4

From Floodplain to Prison

Over fifteen acres of pristine high quality wetlands on the coast of Mississippi could become the next sacrifice to misused HUD low income housing grants. In Hancock County, one of three coastal counties in Mississippi, the Board of Supervisors wants to build a new prison with these funds, and the site they have chosen truly boggles the mind!

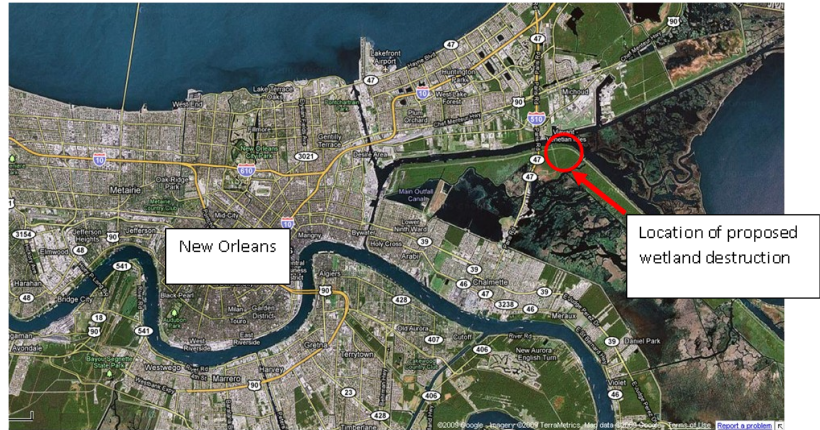
The proposed site, which is located in a coastal flood zone, took on 20 feet of flood water

during Hurricane Katrina. This is not the ideal place to house prisoners, or really build much at all. FEMA rejected the spot for an emergency response building and the Army Corps' Mississippi Coastal Improvement Plan (MSCIP) has the area slated for environmental restoration. However, that did not stop another branch of the Army Corp, the Regulatory Division, from issuing a permit to destroy these same wetlands! This is a prime

Continued on page 3

Wetlands Near MR-GO Again Threatened

Since 2007, a company called Newport Environmental has been attempting to develop over 50 acres of wetlands that stand between New Orleans and the Mississippi River Gulf Outlet. Originally, they wanted to build a landfill there, we fought that project and it was withdrawn. But as we know, bad projects rarely die. So, last year they proposed to destroy the same 57 acres to build an industrial park! Needless to say we don't like this project much better, as it would destroy these wetlands and in the process remove important functions, such as storm water storage, water filtration, and wildlife habitat.



To add insult to injury Newport would be destroying wetlands in the very same area where the Corps of Engineers, the state, and local communities are planning wetland restoration projects. This is why we, along with the Tulane Environmental Law Clinic, and other environmental organizations and concerned citizens attended a public hearing in February in New Orleans to speak out against this destructive proposal. If the state of Louisiana truly wants to save our coast, it needs to get serious about not permitting projects that destroy wetlands and directly conflict with Louisiana's Master Plan. These inconsistencies must stop! We need more wetlands, not less, between the Gulf and Louisiana's populated areas. ■

Citizens Speak Out Against Kemper Coal Project

On February 5th, the Mississippi Public Service Commission met to discuss the cost and benefits of building a massive, dirty and expensive new lignite coal power plant and mine in Kemper County. For months, concerned citizens and groups – like the Mississippi Sierra Club, Mississippi for Affordable Energy, and, of course, GRN – have been speaking out on how the costs of this project to human health, the economy, and the environment far outweigh any potential benefits. And many of these same concerned citizens woke up before

dawn on Friday morning to hop on a bus, ride to Jackson, and tell the PSC commissioners exactly that.

This proposed coal burning plant and mine will destroy or harm roughly 6,000 acres of wetlands, disturb over 40 miles of streams, release toxic chemicals like mercury into waterways, and leave nearby communities vulnerable to catastrophes akin to the recent coal ash spills in Tennessee. And Mississippi Power is asking the PSC to let them charge its ratepayers upwards of \$2.4 billion dollars for this privilege before the plant is even built!



Opponents of Kemper Coal Project Outside of Hearing

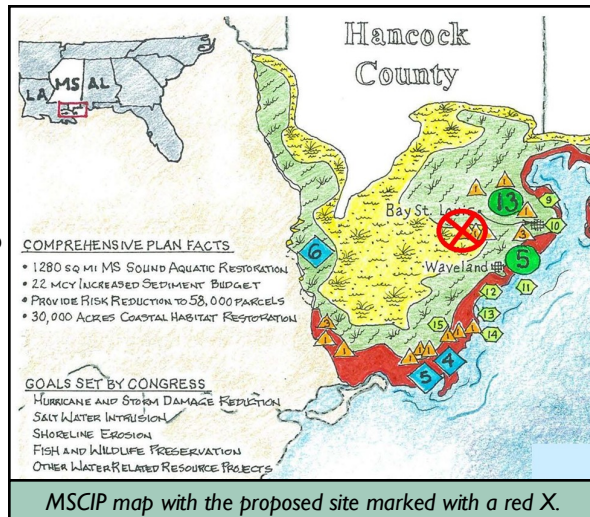
At the hearing, GRN's Casey DeMoss Roberts and Raleigh Hoke both spoke out against the project along with many other concerned citizens from across the state. The testimony ranged from coastal residents concerned about rising power bills, to property owners whose land will be torn asunder by the massive mine. In contrast, many of the individuals that spoke in favor were there to represent industries, or government entities, that stood to directly profit from the project. Although the Commission is not set to make its final decision until early May, it was clear from the hearing that citizens from across the state want to hear a resounding NO from the Commission! ■

From Floodplains to Prison (continued from page 1)

example of the lack of communication and coordination between different departments and bureaucratic fiefdoms within government agencies like the Army Corps.

As one GRN member who lives next door to the area brought to our attention, the site is already prone to flooding. The filling of these valuable wetlands will only exacerbate the problem. One acre of wetlands can absorb up to 10,000 gallons of water. The loss of these wetlands means that another 150,000 gallons of water will have nowhere to go.

Since the 2005 hurricane season, GRN has become more and more alarmed by the rapid destruction of wetlands throughout the Gulf Coast. We actively worked with the Army Corps to develop an effective and environmentally sound plan to restore coastal Mississippi, and the Coastal Improvement Plan that came out of this process fulfills many of these essential goals. Unfortunately, as long as developers, government entities like Hancock County, and other branches of the Army Corps ignore the plan, it remains just words on paper. That's why GRN continues to watchdog bad projects like this and push for true accountability when it comes to restoring our coast. ■



Courtesy of USACE

Support GRN: Update Your Style with Aveda

Thinking about changing your look? Need a haircut or a new color? April is Earth Month at your local Aveda salon. You can support GRN's fight for healthy waters and get a new look too! Since 2006, Aveda salons across the southeast and their distributors, The Salon People and the Neill Corporation, have raised over \$1 million for GRN from their Earth Month events. We're proud to partner with a company that walks the walk to protect our environment.



Walkers on the steps of Florida's state capitol in Tallahassee



"Cut-a-thon" at AvantGarde Salon in Destin, FL

The GRN extends a heartfelt thanks to all of the hardworking Aveda salon staff and their clients for everything they do to make Earth Month a success. Their contributions will support our work to keep our waterways clean by protecting wetlands and keeping pollution such as sewage and fertilizer runoff out of our waters. ■



New Orleans Office
338 Baronne St., Ste. 200
New Orleans, LA 70112
Phone: 504-525-1528

Florida Office
34413 Orchid Parkway
Ridge Manor, FL 33523
Phone: 352-583-0870

Texas Office
PO Box 563
Liberty, TX 77575
Phone: 713-906-3940

Email: Raleigh@healthygulf.org

www.healthygulf.org

GRN Healthy Waters Program Staff

Florida: Joe Murphy
352-583-0870 or
joe@healthygulf.org

Mississippi:
Casey DeMoss Roberts
504-525-1528 x 205 or
casey@healthygulf.org

Raleigh Hoke
504-525-1528 x 204 or
raleigh@healthygulf.org

Louisiana: Matt Rota
504-525-1528 x 206 or
matt@healthygulf.org

Texas:
Ellis Pickett
713-906-3940 or
ellis@healthygulf.org

UNITED FOR A HEALTHY GULF

Marching Towards Protection for MS's Outstanding Waters

Mississippi's rivers, lakes and streams are among the most beautiful and outstanding waters in the nation. Thousands of people every year, from Mississippi and around the world, come to enjoy this amazing natural bounty. Unfortunately, Mississippi's most beautiful and unique waters have not been given the best possible protection available - being listed as an "Outstanding National Resource Water." Outstanding status benefits everyone, from protecting drinking water to irrigation uses, not to mention the wildlife and fish that live in the waters.

For years, GRN and others have been pushing Mississippi to protect its most beautiful, and pristine rivers, creeks and streams by designating them as Outstanding waters. Unfortunately, up until January, the state did not even have a process for citizens to nominate their favorite waterbodies! Thankfully, things are beginning to change for the better.



Courtesy of Roger Smith

Mississippi recently considered changes to its rules for protecting state waters which would allow for individuals or organizations to nominate Outstanding waters in their communities. Although these rules were a positive step in the right direction, the state's proposed nomination process was clearly too complicated and cumbersome for regular Mississippi citizens to get involved in the process. In response, GRN and our partners and allies joined together to push the state to adopt a process that would truly allow the public to get involved in protecting waters in their communities.

Despite the wave of letters, emails and public comments supporting an easier nomination process, the Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) did not budge an inch. In fact, they completely ignored the public's comments and released the rules without a single change! This is yet another example of the state of Mississippi favoring the whims of big, polluting industries over the will of concerned citizens and the health of rivers and creeks in the state. In response to this outrageous breach of the public trust, GRN and our allies registered our complaints with MDEQ officials and will continue to push for a streamlined process for nominating Outstanding waters.

Nonetheless, the fact that the state has finally moved to develop a nomination process is a step in the right direction, and we commend MDEQ for this action. In the coming weeks, MDEQ will be releasing more detailed instructions on the nomination process. As the details of this process unfold, we will be working with community partners, and members and activists like you, to protect the health of Mississippi's most outstanding waters and the families, communities, and wildlife which rely on them. If you would like to help nominate a waterbody in your community, please contact Raleigh Hoke at (504) 525-1528, ext. 204 or by email at Raleigh@healthygulf.org. ■

Is Cleaner Water in Florida's Future? (continued from page 1)

While the U.S. EPA process is not perfect, it is a great step in the right direction to ensure that, after almost 40 years since its passage, the Clean Water Act may mean something in Florida when it comes to nitrogen and phosphorus pollution.

Gulf Restoration Network played a critical and essential role recently in turning out concerned citizen to a series of public hearings on the new EPA water quality goals and standards. Working with our partners including the Sierra Club, Earthjustice Legal Defense Fund, Clean Water Network of Florida, St. Johns Riverkeeper, the Conservancy of Southwest Florida, and others, we organized Floridians across the state to attend these hearings and be a voice for clean water. Due to the large amount of interest at these hearings, EPA has added more hearings in Florida during the week of April 12, and has extended the comment deadline to April 28.

Our work continues on as we encourage Floridians who swim, paddle, fish, hunt, snorkel, dive, sail, or surf to contact the EPA and urge them to move forward with meaningful water quality protections in Florida. Future generations of Floridians deserve no less. ■