



VANISHING PARADISE

A program of National Wildlife Federation

Dear State Senator Hensgens:

The undersigned sportsmen, sporting businesses and organizations would like to thank you for your support of coastal restoration. We are writing today in support of the Mid-Barataria Sediment Diversion. This game-changing restoration project is the single largest ecosystem restoration project in U.S. history, and implementation will ensure future generations of hunters and anglers can enjoy the bounty our Louisiana coastal wetlands have traditionally offered.

We recognize the critical, long-term benefits of sediment diversions to several fisheries, including speckled trout, largemouth bass and redfish. While there will certainly be seasonal impacts and displacement of speckled trout fishing in eastern Barataria Bay during diversion operation, it should be noted speckled trout utilize low salinity coastal marshes and submerged aquatic vegetation influenced by freshwater influxes annually during the fall to the early spring.

Some of Louisiana's most productive speckled trout areas are the Lake Pontchartrain Basin and areas of Western Terrebonne Parish where the Mississippi, Pearl and Atchafalaya Rivers keep salinity levels below five parts per thousand throughout much of the year. The loss of brackish and intermediate marsh in the Barataria Basin has reduced speckled trout production and fishing opportunities, especially over the last two decades. The loss of vital habitat will continue without large-scale marsh restoration projects like the Mid-Barataria Diversion. It is also worth noting, speckled trout's primary forage bases like shrimp, menhaden and mullet all utilize low-salinity marshes during their juvenile and development stages.

For waterfowl, sediment diversions are a boon. Open water bays where our coast has eroded offer little value to ducks, but where crevasses and breaks allow silt-laden waters to flow, the water shallows and food appears. Diving ducks are often the first beneficiaries, and as the area transitions to ponds and the resulting food, puddle ducks thrive. It has been proven time after time that sediment diversions maintain, and build, quality waterfowl habitat. Louisiana is renowned for our speckled trout fishing and duck hunting, but the most popular gamefish in North America, the largemouth bass, also thrives in our marshes. While technically a freshwater fish, largemouth bass flourish in three parts per thousand (ppt) salinity and tolerate levels as high as eight. Both recreational and tournament fishermen have long enjoyed fishing in Louisiana's wetlands and the Mid-Barataria Sediment Diversion will increase those opportunities.

These, and other, outdoor pursuits are critical to the future of our state's legacy as Sportsman's Paradise, and to the many businesses which rely on hunting and fishing. These are not simply hobbies, they are a foundational component of our history and our culture. We ask that you support the Mid-Barataria Sediment Diversion project, which is currently in a public comment period. This project will build more wetlands than any other individual restoration project in the world and is the scale of project needed to address the serious coastal habitat losses we face. It is essential to the future of our Sportsman's Paradise.

Respectfully Yours,

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Go-Devil Manufacturers of Louisiana

Ryan Lambert
Cajun Fishing Adventures

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