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VANISHING PARADISE COMMENDS LOUISIANA LEGISLATURE FOR APPROVING STATE'S 2012 COASTAL MASTER PLAN

Plan lays out vision for protecting and restoring Louisiana's coastal resources and communities

NEW ORLEANS, LA - The coalition of more than 700 national state and local hunting and fishing organizations and businesses that is Vanishing Paradise praised the Louisiana Legislature today for unanimously approving the 2012 Louisiana Coastal Master Plan, a 50-year blueprint for restoring the rapidly disappearing coastal wetlands around the Mississippi River Delta. The plan lays out a vision for protecting the state's natural resources and communities and is a comprehensive, science-based vision that realistically addresses the range of possibilities for restoring and protecting the coast.

"The 2012 Coastal Master Plan illustrates the type of bold, decisive action needed to build a more secure future for the fish, waterfowl and other wildlife of the great Mississippi River Delta," said Land Tawney, National Wildlife Federation's senior manager for sportsman leadership. "We must reconnect the river to its wetlands, and repair the coast that provides world-class fresh and saltwater fishing opportunities and gives millions of our nation's waterfowl a warm home for the winter."

"As we applaud the state Legislature for its leadership and commitment to restoration, we must also now begin the difficult task of funding critical elements of the plan," Tawney continued. "The $50 billion necessary to achieve the state's vision of restoration is far from guaranteed, but it is vital for securing our future. Louisiana is unified in addressing the coastal issues moving forward, and sportsmen and women from across the country are now calling on Congress to pass the RESTORE Act, so that we can work toward not just recovery from the oil spill but also long-term coastal resiliency."

The RESTORE Act, currently making its way through Congress, would dedicate 80 percent of Clean Water Act penalties from the gulf oil disaster toward Gulf Coast environmental and economic restoration. These funds could be used to jump start the development of restoration projects in the Coastal Master Plan, which is expected to cost $50 billion over the next fifty years.

The RESTORE Act has been an important initiative in conservation legislation for hunters and anglers from across the country due to the 10 million migratory waterfowl that winter or stopover on the

Mississippi River Delta and the hugely significant commercial and recreational fishery the Gulf produces. The amendment comes at a crucial time for an ecosystem that faced extreme degradation before the oil spill, which only added insult to injury. Although much of the visible oil is gone, the region remains in jeopardy as food supplies and habitats are still recovering from the impacts of oil—and may face impacts from the spill for decades.

The suite of projects outlined in the plan has received widespread support from a diverse array of coastal advocates, stakeholders, parish officials and communities. Additionally, a recent poll conducted by Baton Rouge-based Southern Media & Opinion Research revealed that an overwhelming majority of Louisiana voters recognizes the value of our wetlands, natural resources and coastal infrastructure to the state's future.

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