



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **DIVERSE GULF COAST INTERESTS BACK FEDERAL LEGISLATION TO ACCELERATE OFFSHORE REVENUE SHARING, EXPEDITE GRANTS TO STATES**

NEW ORLEANS – The America's Energy Coast group is calling for Congress to accelerate immediately the sharing of offshore oil and gas revenues with producing states along the U.S. Gulf Coast and to amend a bill to expedite long delayed grants to those states from the Coastal Impact Assistance program (CIAP).

The group representing conservation, energy, and diverse interests throughout the four-state region of Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama, released a resolution supporting Congressional efforts to help impacted states speed up coastal restoration efforts along already deteriorating marshes and coastal landscapes, now exacerbated by the ongoing oil flow from the Deepwater Horizon rig explosion.

The America's Energy Coast initiative calls for approval of:

---An amendment expediting distribution of the remaining 80% of the \$1 billion Coastal Impact Assistance Program (CIAP) intended to mitigate the impacts of offshore energy activity in the America's Energy Coast states. The funds were supposed to be distributed to the states by 2010 but the U.S. Minerals Management Service has disbursed only 20%, due to delays.

--The 2005 Gulf of Mexico Energy Security Act (GOMESA) that will share offshore oil and gas revenues with the Gulf coastal producing states will not fully go into effect until the year 2017. Legislation to accelerate that revenue sharing for coastal restoration would help address an already deteriorating ecosystem, especially in light of the ongoing oil leak from the Deepwater Horizon rig that is further impacting sensitive marshes, barrier islands and beaches.

R. King Milling, chair of the America's WETLAND Foundation that created the America's Energy Coast initiative, noted the coastal marshes were rapidly eroding long before the spill. "We have an ecosystem that is in a state of continual deterioration," Milling said. "We've got to step back, look at the overall system and take steps to correct this."

Coastal land loss began after the U.S. leveed the Mississippi River in the early 1930s, funneling fresh water and sediment off the Outer Continental Shelf, robbing the naturally subsiding wetlands of their necessary nutrients. The result has been land loss at the fastest rate on the planet - the equivalent of a football field every 50 minutes.



“This problem is something our country has to take note of,” Milling said. “This is going to be a difficult battle, whether we are attacking the spill or deteriorating wetlands. We have been encouraged by the recent “road map” released by the White House Council on Environmental Quality and its Federal agency working group. They are trying to get their heads around this and have put forth a promising plan to address the urgent needs along the Louisiana and Mississippi coasts.”

Valsin A. Marmillion, managing director of the America’s WETLAND Foundation, said, “We have wetlands that are on life support,” Marmillion said. “Anything that happens to them is very threatening. We need the commitment of the federal government and a dedicated stream of revenue. The states hosting this nationally critical energy production sustain the impacts and need this steady stream of revenue to deal with the scale of restoration required.”

Sidney Coffee, policy advisor to the Foundation, said, “It takes the cooperation of all interests converging along this strategic coast – environmental and economic. All the benefits this landscape provides our nation will be irrevocably altered and its value lost - the flyway for migratory songbirds that depend on this habitat as they make their way to backyards all over the U.S., the nursery grounds for most of the marine life in the Gulf of Mexico; a globally significant ecological treasure, more important than any of our differences.”

“If this vulnerable system is lost, the cost to this nation is going to be staggering,” Milling said. “It will impact navigation, the oil and gas industry, the environment and more than two-million people. These are economic realities we must all face as a nation.”

*The America’s WETLAND Foundation continues to raise awareness through on-the-ground programs for volunteer restoration projects, in conjunction with the LSU Ag Center and AmeriCorps. Supporters of restoration are encouraged to join Saints Super Bowl champion linebacker, Scott Fujita, by texting 20222 to make a \$10.00 donation for buying grasses to plant by wetland restoration teams.*

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*America’s WETLAND Foundation is a non-partisan, non-profit organization that has acted as a neutral arbiter for coastal interests since its inception in 2002, elevating issues facing the Gulf Coast, specifically those of coastal land loss, to regional and national attention. Through its America’s Energy Coast initiative, the Foundation has brought together a diverse group of major U.S.-based businesses and industries, national environmental organizations, renowned scientists and researchers, and coastal interests from across the four energy-producing states of Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama.*

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