

Council President Clarkson
To Give Testimony on Coastal Erosion Today
Before the Mississippi River Fresh Water Diversion Summit
In New Orleans

News Release

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New Orleans
City Council

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New Orleans, LA - March 4, 2009 - Council President Jacquelyn Brechtel Clarkson will appear before the Mississippi River Fresh Water Diversion Summit today to urge the Corps of Engineers to consider using large scale diversions to restore Louisiana's coastline.

"Hurricane protection is not just about levees, it is about rebuilding our coastline, and large scale diversions are the key to that," said Council President Clarkson.

Large scale diversions would redirect the Mississippi River to flow through parts of South Louisiana, carrying sediment and fresh water with it - both of which sustain and rebuild wetlands. These diversions are widely seen by experts across the country as key to restoring Louisiana's coastline and to building real hurricane protection.

Councilmember Clarkson continued, "The crucial requirement for large-scale diversions designed to both maintain navigation and provide critical elements of restoration and protection is essential. The support of opinions from engineers and scientists throughout the country mandates this conclusion with little margin for dispute."

Such diversions were not necessary in the 1800s and early 1900s because the Mississippi River naturally spread freshwater and sediment throughout southeast Louisiana, building and sustaining the swamps and marshes. However, as the Mississippi River was contained with channels, this spreading ceased. Now, the river's freshwater, nutrients and

the sediment are funneled straight into the Gulf of Mexico.

Coastal Louisiana has lost more than 1,875 square miles of land between 1932 and 2000 this way. Eighty years ago, New Orleans was 54 miles from the Gulf of Mexico. If no effort is made to restore the coastline, experts predict New Orleans will be less than 20 miles from the Gulf by 2050.

Louisiana's Coastal Restoration and Protection Authority has advocated for the construction of large scale diversions to sustain and build wetlands since the release of its Masterplan, which was commissioned by the Louisiana Legislature in 2005.

Council President Clarkson will be the only official from Orleans Parish present today to petition the Corps for this vital protection.

New Orleans City Council

The New Orleans City Council is the legislative branch of New Orleans city government. The Council considers and enacts all local laws that govern the City of New Orleans. The Council also approves the operating and capital budgets for the City, as recommended by the mayor, and continually monitors revenues and expenditures for local government operations. The City Council is also the regulatory body for public utilities. It also reviews and has final say on many land use and zoning matters, as well as considers major economic development projects for the City. As a Board of Review for Orleans Parish, the Council examines appeals of property tax assessments for real estate taxes, and certifies tax rolls to the Louisiana Tax Commission. Other responsibilities of the Council include overseeing the operation of the public access television in Orleans Parish.

The City Council is comprised of five districts and two councilmembers-at-large. Council President and Councilmember-at-Large Jacquelyn Brechtel Clarkson; Council Vice-President and Councilmember-at-Large Arnie Fielkow; District "A" Councilmember Shelley Midura; District "B" Councilmember Stacy S. Head; District "C" Councilmember James Carter; District "D" Councilmember Cynthia Hedge-Morrell; and District "E" Councilmember Cynthia Willard-Lewis.