

Council President Clarkson
To Introduce Coastal Restoration and Protection Resolution
At Council Meeting Tomorrow

News Release

March 18, 2009

Contact:

Jacquelyn Cole

Office of

Councilmember-at-Large
Jacquelyn Brechtel Clarkson

Ph: 504-658-1072

Cell: 504-577-3600

jcole@cityofno.com

[New Orleans
City Council](#)

[Join Our Mailing List!](#)



New Orleans, LA - March 18, 2009 - Council President Jacquelyn Brechtel Clarkson will introduce a resolution at tomorrow's Council Meeting that calls upon the City of New Orleans to support the construction of large-scale land diversions in an effort to sustain and rebuild Louisiana's coastal wetlands.

The Resolution also calls upon the City to take a lead in advocating for land diversions in ways it has historically left to other coastal Louisiana parishes.

"Rebuilding coastal wetlands is the most important means we have of saving our City from catastrophic hurricanes - especially the parts of the City most vulnerable to a Gulf storm surge, including the Historic Lower Ninth Ward, Venetian Isles, New Orleans East, and the West Bank," Clarkson said.

She continued, "Some say the City doesn't have a role to play here, that this is solely a state or federal issue. But they are wrong. As elected officials, we need to step up to the plate as other parishes have and demand more than just levees. We need to demand that rebuilding our coast is a priority."

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. Such diversions are widely seen by experts across the country as key to restoring Louisiana's coastline. Louisiana's Coastal Restoration and Protection Authority has advocated for the construction of land diversions since the release of its Masterplan, which was commissioned by the Louisiana Legislature in 2005.

Two weeks ago, the Council President represented the City of New Orleans at the Mississippi River Fresh Water Diversion Summit in New Orleans, where she publicly urged the Corps of Engineers to consider using large scale diversions to restore Louisiana's coastline. She also urged the Corps not to proceed without including the interests of Louisiana's navigation industry.

Councilmember Clarkson said, "The Corps needs to listen to South Louisianians. Levees are important, of course. But if we expect real, sustainable protection from massive storms, we have got to expand our focus to rebuilding wetlands. And we need every vested interest at the table."

Land 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 swamps and marshes. But 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.

In the coming weeks, Council President Clarkson will ask the City Council to approve an ordinance forming a special committee to address coastal restoration and land diversions. This committee's work will result in an action plan for involving Orleans Parish leaders in advocating for coastal restoration.

Coastal Louisiana has lost more than 1,875 square miles of land between 1932 and 2000. 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.

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.