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**COMMERCE**

**NEWS**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
Sept. 17, 2003

**AGENCIES SEEK INPUT ON DRAFT REGIONAL RESTORATION  
PLAN FOR NATURAL RESOURCES INJURED BY OIL SPILLS**

Federal and Louisiana state natural resource trustee officials are soliciting public comments on a draft Regional Restoration Plan to restore natural resources injured by oil spills. This draft Region 2 Plan is the first of nine regional plans to be developed under the statewide Louisiana Regional Restoration Planning Program.

The U.S. Department of Commerce's National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), the state of Louisiana, and the U.S. Department of the Interior have developed a statewide program to expedite restoration of natural resources injured by oil spills and reduce the cost of natural resource damage assessments — the process by which trustee agencies assess and restore resources injured by oil spills.

Region 2 encompasses the Breton Sound and Barataria hydrologic basins and the lower Mississippi River basin, delta plain, and modern Balize (Birdsfoot) delta, including state waters in the Gulf of Mexico. The following parishes are located either partly or completely within Region 2: Ascension, Assumption, Jefferson, Lafourche, Orleans, Plaquemines, St. Bernard, St. Charles, St. James, and St. John the Baptist.

The draft plan describes the affected environment, biological resources, and associated habitat types, as well as the natural resources/services that are likely to be injured by an incident; appropriate restoration types for each of the potentially injured resources or services; and available restoration projects that have been identified to date.

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One of the key features of the draft Region 2 Plan is the determination of a representative unit cost to restore predominant habitat types in the region as part of a cash settlement. The predominant habitat types in Region 2 are coastal herbaceous wetlands, oyster reefs, and coastal-forested wetlands.

For more information about the Louisiana Regional Restoration Planning Program and to receive a copy of the Draft Region 2 Regional Restoration Plan, please contact: William Conner, Chief, NOAA/Damage Assessment Center, 1305 East-West Highway, SSMC #4, 10<sup>th</sup> floor, Silver Spring, MD, 20910, Phone: (301) 713-3038 x190, Fax: (301) 713-4389, Email: William.Conner@noaa.gov. Or: Charles Armbruster, RRP Program Manager, Louisiana Oil Spill Coordinator's Office, Office of the Governor, 150 Third Street, Suite 405, Baton Rouge, LA 70801, Phone: (225) 219-5800, Fax: (225) 219-5802, Email: carmbruster@losco.state.la.us.

Written comments on the draft Region 2 Plan should be submitted to William Conner by October 15, 2003, at the address listed above.

NOAA's National Ocean Service balances environmental protection with economic prosperity in fulfilling its mission of promoting safe navigation, supporting coastal communities, sustaining coastal habitats and mitigating coastal hazards.

The Commerce Department's National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration is dedicated to enhancing economic security and national safety through the prediction and research of weather and climate-related events and providing environmental stewardship of our nation's coastal and marine resources.

On the Web:

NOAA – <http://www.noaa.gov>

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