

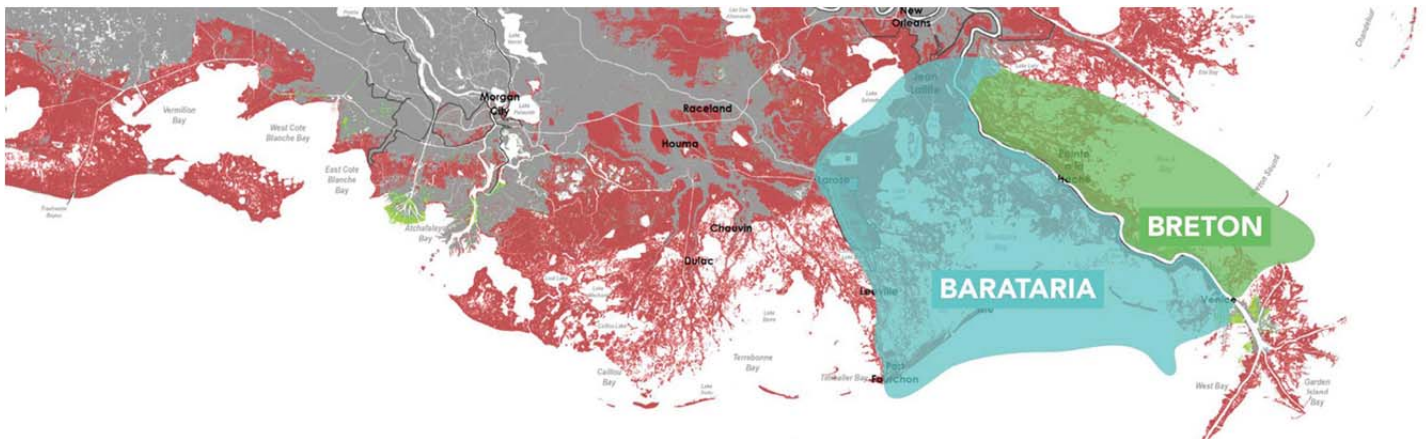


Mississippi River Mid-Basin Sediment Diversion Program: Mid-Barataria and Mid-Breton Sediment Diversions

Project Overview

Louisiana's continued land loss largely impacts our citizens, economy, commerce, infrastructure, and culture. Furthermore, the collapse of coastal Louisiana would negatively impact the entire country: Louisiana's coast provides protection for infrastructure that supplies 90% of the nation's outer continental oil and gas, 20% of the nation's annual waterborne commerce, 26% (by weight) of the continental U.S. commercial fisheries landings, and winter habitat for five million migratory waterfowl.

The Barataria and Breton Basins are two areas that have experienced significant land loss due to sediment deprivation, hydrologic alteration, subsidence, sea level rise, and salt water intrusion. Since the Mississippi River was leveed in the 1930s, the Barataria and Breton Basins and Mississippi River Delta have lost approximately 700 square miles (or 447,000 acres) of land, representing one of the highest land loss rates in the world.



Louisiana's Coastal Master Plan identifies sediment diversions as necessary projects to create a more sustainable coastal Louisiana landscape. Over the next several years, CPRA will work to optimize operations, formulate the final project design, and apply for appropriate permits in order to construct these large, innovative projects.

Issues to be Addressed

To address the root of the problem, it is important to "reconnect the river" and restore the natural processes that initially built the delta. Controlled sediment diversions offer a unique opportunity to strategically reestablish hydrologic flows, carry land-building sediments, nourish marshes, and sustain land. When utilized with Louisiana's full suite of protection and restoration projects, this integrated systems approach can combat the grave land loss that threatens our coast. The Mid-Barataria and Mid-Breton Sediment Diversions will divert sediment-laden water from the river and deposit it into the basins to build and sustain land.

Project Benefits

Since 2007, CPRA has dredged nearly 30 million cubic yards of sediment from Mississippi River borrow sites. This work has created, restored, and nourished nearly 4,000 acres of marsh, barrier islands, and ridge habitat. As outlined in Louisiana's Coastal Master Plan, Louisiana needs a holistic approach to coastal restoration and protection. Dredging projects create land immediately and provide critically needed short-term benefits. However, long-term sustainability is a major issue for these projects. The delivery of sediment via sediment diversion projects may take longer to yield land building results, but once established will continue to build and sustain land.

Additionally, over the next 15 years, CPRA plans to dredge as much as 55-65 million cubic yards. However, our latest research shows that when implemented together, marsh creation and sediment diversion projects perform better together and for a longer period than they do as individual projects. Sediment diversions will complement these restoration projects to maximize land building where we need it the most. The latest estimates show that constructing a marsh creation project within the proximity of a sediment diversion will prolong its life by 10 – 20 years.

Project Design and Location

Mid-Barataria

The Mid-Barataria Sediment Diversion structure will be located in Plaquemines Parish, LA, along the west bank of the Mississippi River, just north of Ironton and south of the Phillips 66 Alliance Refinery, near Mississippi River Mile 61.

Mid-Breton

The Mid-Breton Sediment Diversion structure will be located in Plaquemines Parish, LA, north of the Mid-Barataria location on the east bank of the Mississippi River, near Wills Point, approximately at Mississippi River Mile 69.

Next Steps

Environmental Permitting

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires federal agencies to integrate environmental values into their decision-making processes by considering the environmental impacts of their proposed actions and reasonable alternatives to those actions.

An Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is a detailed analysis that serves to provide a discussion of potential environmental impacts and reasonable alternatives which would avoid or minimize adverse impacts or enhance the quality of the human environment.

Mid-Barataria

The EIS for Mid-Barataria is currently underway. Throughout 2018, GEC will engage the public, other federal agencies, and outside parties to provide input into the preparation of an EIS and to solicit public comment on the draft EIS once completed.

Mid-Breton

The EIS process for the Mid-Breton Sediment Diversion project is anticipated to begin in 2018.

Engineering and Design

Over the next several years, CPRA will work to optimize operations, formulate the final project design, and apply for appropriate construction permits in order to construct these foundational projects for the coastal master plan. At the same time, planning efforts will continue to evaluate additional diversions.