MRGO: The Road to Recovery

Assessing Closure Impacts, Restoration Needs, and Community Recovery

Louisiana Governor's Advisory Commission
2/9/21
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American Rivers ● Citizens Against Widening the Industrial Canal ● Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana
Deep South Center For Environmental Justice ● Environmental Defense Fund ● Global Green ● Healthy Gulf
Holy Cross Neighborhood Association Levees.org ● Louisiana Environmental Action Network
Louisiana Wildlife Federation ● Lower Mississippi Riverkeeper
Lower Ninth Ward Center for Sustainable Engagement and Development ● lowernine.org
Mary Queen of Vietnam Community Development Corporation
National Audubon Society ● National Wildlife Federation ● Pontchartrain Conservancy ● Sierra Club – Delta Chapter

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Common Ground Relief ● New Orleans 350
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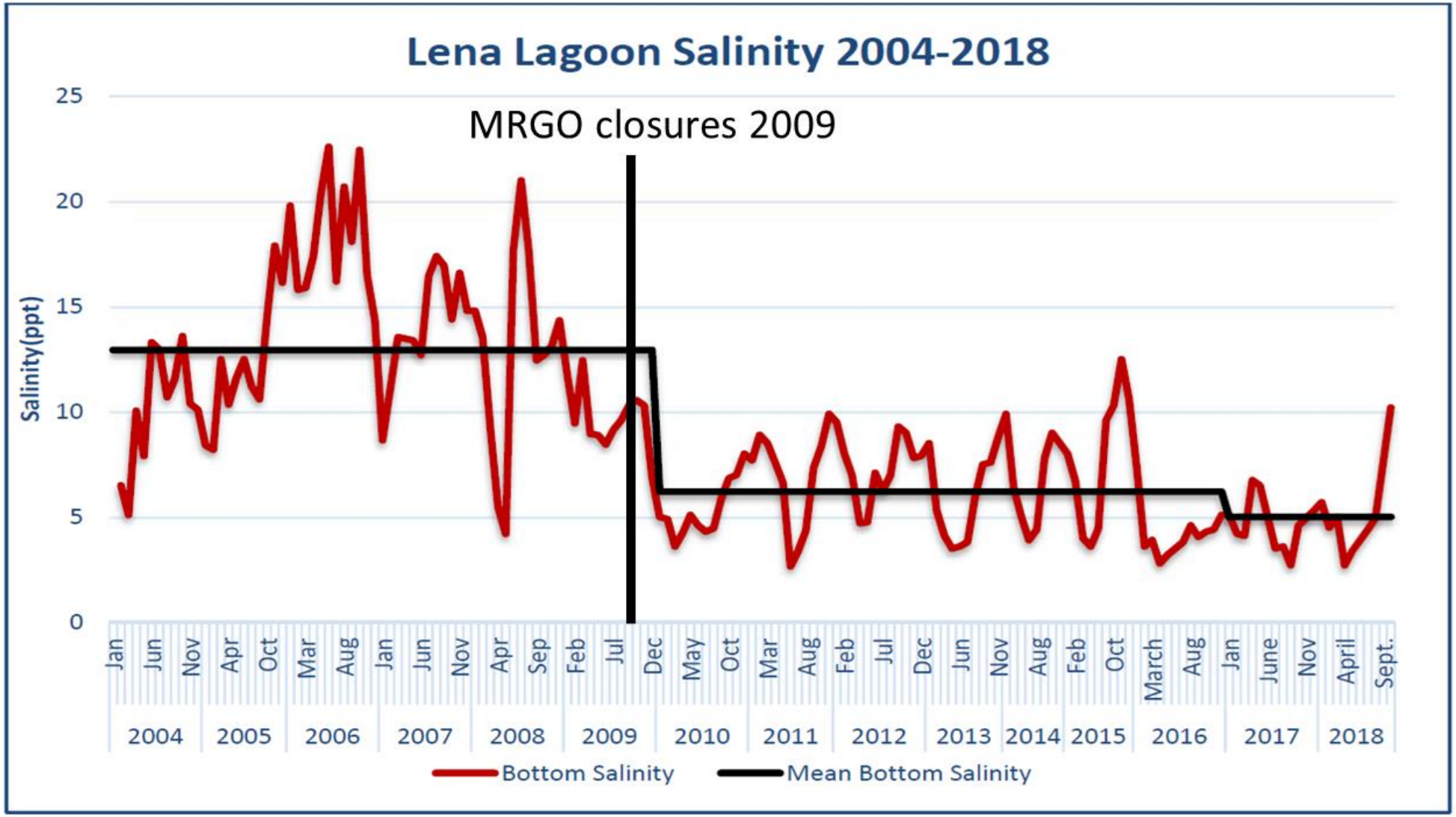
The Arlene and Joseph Meraux Charitable Foundation

Overview

Assessing Mississippi River Gulf Outlet (MRGO) ecosystem restoration and community recovery at the 15th anniversary of Hurricane Katrina and a decade post-closure of the MRGO

- Over 1 million acres of coastal habitat impacted by the MRGO
- Benefits of rock dam from Maurepas to Biloxi Marsh
- No funding allocated for USACE 2012 MRGO Ecosystem Restoration Feasibility Report
- Restoration and community recovery must be prioritized by government



Source: Pontchartrain Conservancy

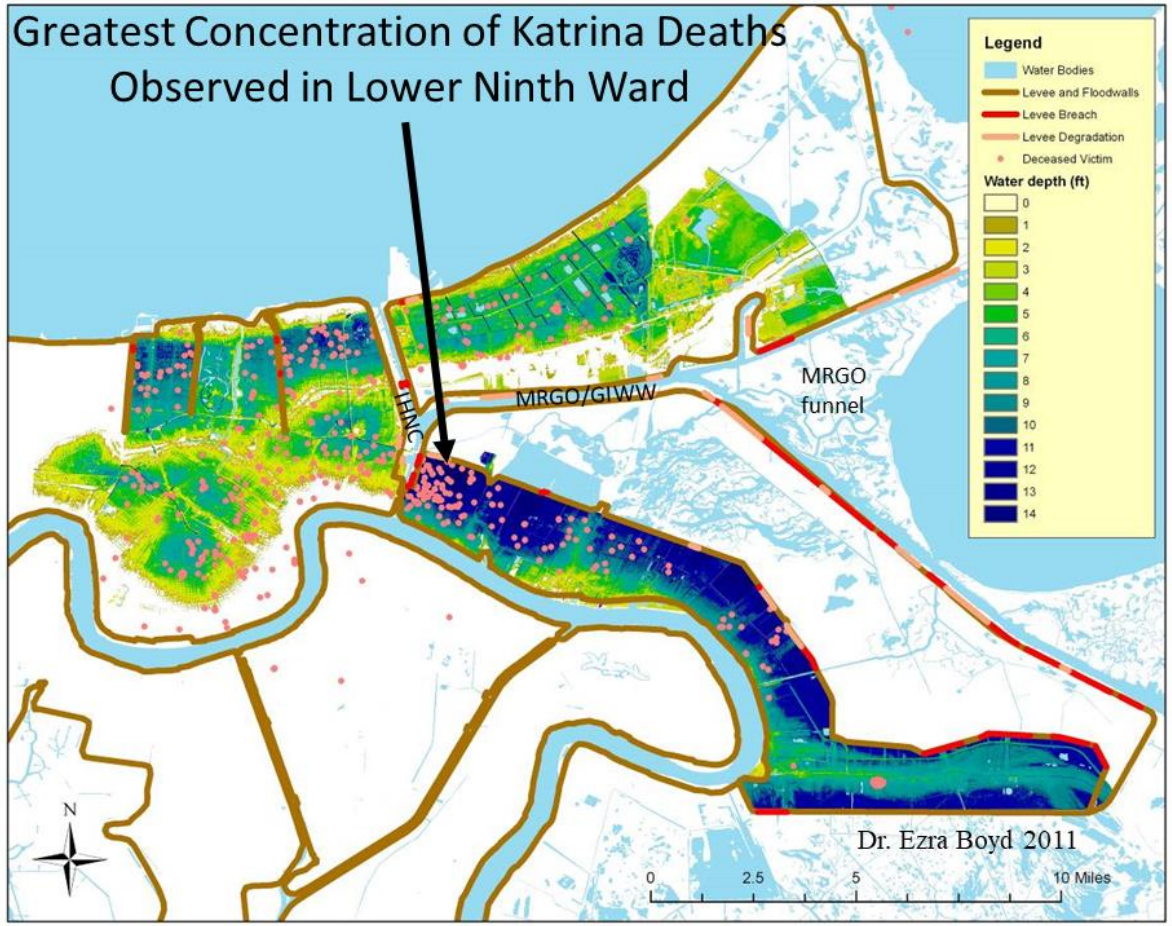
Environmental Benefits of Closure

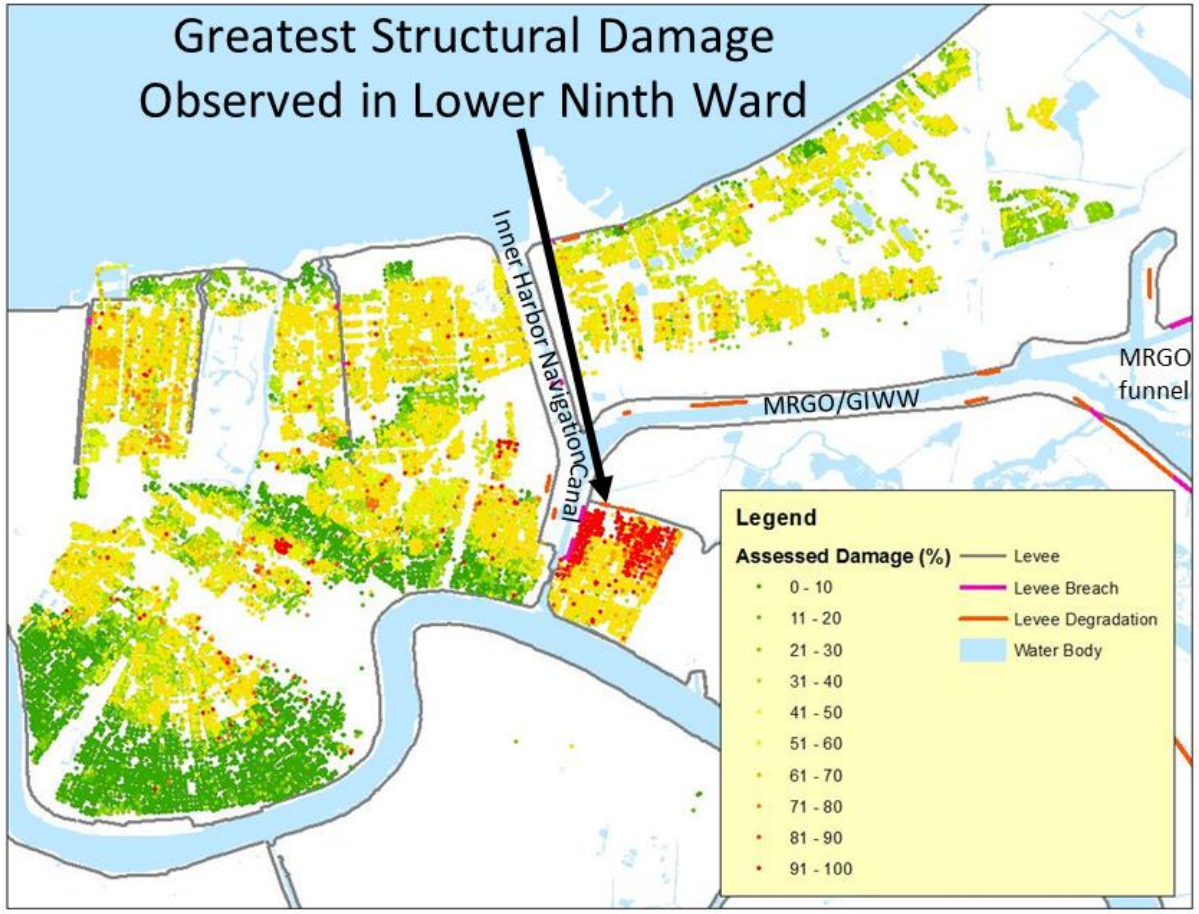
- Historical salinity gradients restored for over 1.2 million acres of coastal habitat
- Eleven years of monitoring reveal the basin's new salinity and hydrology composition
- Recovering ecosystems and species
  - Swamps
  - Oysters
  - Clams

Community Recovery

- Generations of families have endured impacts of MRGO
- Lower population and reduced infrastructure hamper recovery
- Local communities will continue to bear the burden of the federal project until restoration and recovery is prioritized by the government.
- Federal projects must ensure environmental justice.

Source: FEMA





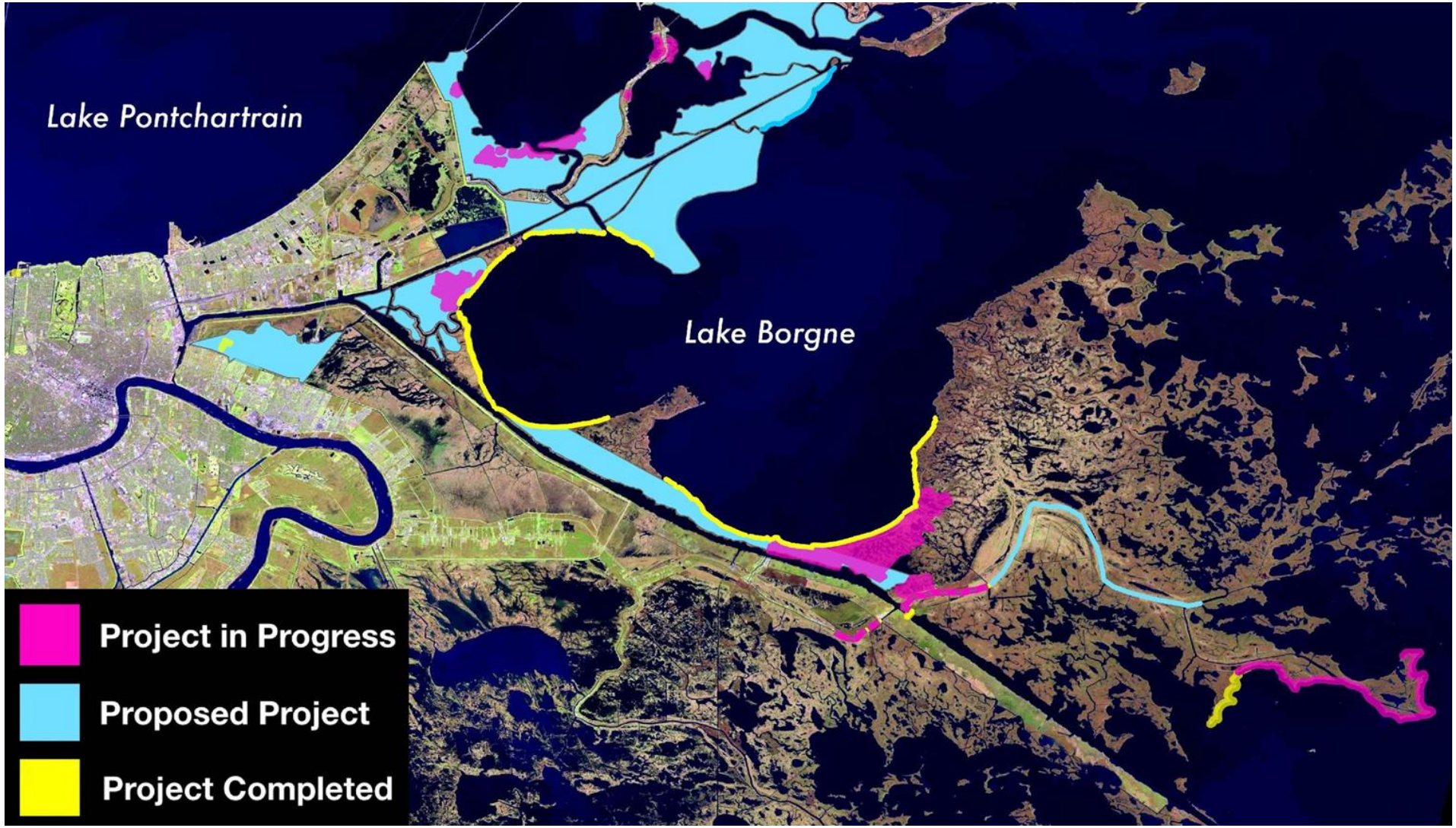
Source: Ezra Boyd, PhD

Prioritization of Restoration

- Advocacy and engagement in planning efforts have led to restoration progress in the MRGO ecosystem
- Scale of projects moving forward are significantly smaller than what is recommended by state and federal governments
- Ongoing cost share disputes hamper restoration process, leaving communities vulnerable
- Must press forward, prioritize restoration, and think holistically about the opportunity we have to benefit habitat, protect communities, and build the local economy

Congressman Garret Graves, then CPRA Director, speaks about the importance of restoration in the Lower Ninth Ward in 2013.

Restoration Projects in the lower Pontchartrain Basin



Proposed projects in the 2017 Coastal Master Plan and actual projects in progress and completed since Hurricane Katrina

Credit: Josh Lewis, PhD.

Thank you

www.MRGOmustGO.org