

## Wetlands conservation grant to fund Terrebonne Parish project

Andrew Canulette - June 15, 2013



Courtesy of DU

A nearly \$1 million North American Wetlands Conservation Act grant is being leveraged to help protect more than 16,000 acres of marshes in Terrebonne Parish.

A section of Louisiana's coastal wetlands is about to get a major shot in the arm.

[Ducks Unlimited](#) announced May 29 that it and its partners received a North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA) grant for coastal marsh restoration efforts in the Bayou State.

The grant, worth nearly \$1 million, will be combined with other contributions of more than \$2 million to improve more than 16,000 acres of coastal wetlands, including a long-awaited project on Liner's Canal in Terrebonne Parish.

"The project is already permitted out," said Bob Dew, DU manager of conservation programs in Louisiana. "Technically, we could go to construction any time. But, to be honest, it's likely that work will begin in the next six months. It should take 100 days, roughly, to complete the work."

Plans for the Liner's Canal project call for a multi-bay water-control structure to increase the freshwater flow through the canal, which links Lake Penchant and Lake Decade. Penchant currently is part of a highly functional freshwater

system, Dew said, while Decade has a much higher salinity level.

The same problem with saltwater intrusion is found in almost all areas heading south from Decade toward the Gulf of Mexico.

"Liner's Canal was dredged out back in the 1930s or '40s," Dew said. "The canal cuts through an old ridge, and there is a structure there that maintains the hydrological output. Upstream of the structure is the Penchant Basin, which gets water from the Atchafalaya (River). It's a really solid freshwater system.

"The structure is basically a bulkhead with an 8- or 9-foot opening that is about 4 feet deep to let boats through. The new structure will be 10 feet wide and a lot deeper. Plus, we'll have additional openings in the structure to let even more freshwater through."

The effort should have a direct impact on myriad items relative to conservation, DU said, including the sustenance of the ecosystem and wildlife, but also the creation and retention of jobs, as well as the increase of recreational opportunities such as bird watching and boating.

It also should have a significant impact on fishing and hunting.

That last item is not lost on DU — the world's largest non-profit organization dedicated to conserving North America's waterfowl habitat.

"Most dabbling ducks prefer a mix of fresh and intermediate marsh," Dew said. "We hope to expand the freshwater system and maintain what we have now, as well."

The Liner's Canal project has been on the minds of local conservationists for years, Dew said. It was written into several Coastal Wetlands Planning, Protection and Restoration Act projects in recent years, only to be stricken from the final products. With the grant and matching funds in hand, that no longer will be a worry, Dew said.

"We just decided to go ahead and build, and pay for, the project," Dew said.

The structure to be built, as well as the marsh that is to be impacted, is owned by the Apache Corporation. The company has been an active partner in the grant process, as has Terrebonne Parish.

Also partnering and contributing financially to the effort, Dew said, are the [Moore-Odom Wildlife Foundation](#), the Louisiana Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority and the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries.

Additional projects to be undertaken with the NAWCA grant money and matching donations include:

- Permanent protection of nearly 6,000 acres of intermediate marsh habitat in Louisiana.
- Restoration of more than 3,700 acres of coastal wetlands in west-central Lafourche Parish.
- Restoration of approximately 6,000 acres of private lands across the coastal zone through the Louisiana Waterfowl Project program, which provides technical and cost-share assistance to landowners wanting to improve their property for waterfowl and other wetland wildlife.

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