

On Making Resources Available Regarding Destruction and Loss of Coastal Wetlands.

Approved by the 219th Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) General Assembly (2010)

RECOMMENDATION

The Presbytery of South Louisiana respectfully overtures the 219th General Assembly (2010) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to:

- 1. Direct the General Assembly Mission Council, through its Environmental Ministries office, to make educational resources available concerning coastal land loss.**
- 2. Direct the General Assembly Mission Council, through its Congregational Ministries Publishing, to work in conjunction with the Presbytery of South Louisiana to develop resources on the implications of coastal wetlands loss for God's creation and God's community.**
- 3. Establish financial support for a theological wetlands education center in the Presbytery of South Louisiana for Presbyterians of all ages to learn to be stewards of the wetlands and proactive in their repair.**
- 4. Direct the Committee on Mission Responsibility Through Investment (MRTI) to examine the role of corporations and institutions in the destruction and restoration of the wetlands and report back to the 220th General Assembly (2012).**
- 5. Direct the General Assembly Mission Council, through its Washington Office of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), to advocate with members of the United States Congress to take measures to restore land lost due to coastal erosion in southern deltaic regions of Louisiana.**

RATIONALE

"The earth is the LORD's and all that is in it" (Ps 24:1).

Hurricane Katrina (2005) and other recent hurricanes have exposed the vulnerability of New Orleans and other communities to flooding and destruction because of the loss of wetlands. Coastal erosion is happening in south Louisiana at a faster rate than anywhere else on earth and this massive coastal loss has negative spiritual, cultural, environmental, and economic implications.¹

- A land mass equivalent to the size of the state of Delaware has been lost from the Louisiana coastline in the last seventy years due mainly to human-caused factors.
- South Louisiana is home to a unique blend of cultures including people of Native American, Creole, Vietnamese American, and Cajun descent and is a habitat for a variety of species whose continuing existence is threatened by coastal land loss.
- South Louisiana's natural resources, such as petroleum and seafood, are vital to the U.S. economy.

- Hurricanes are at their strongest when they make landfall. The wetlands of South Louisiana have historically served as a buffer zone that protected inland communities and estuaries from storm surge and strong winds.
- An increasing amount of damage in terms of suffering and property loss is expected due to the disappearance of this buffer zone unless action is taken to restore the coast.
- The 202nd General Assembly (1990) passed the resolution "Restoring Creation for Ecology and Justice," that called for the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to take stronger action on environmental matters.
- Ezekiel 47:8–12 depicts the ecological richness of coastal wetlands, a special piece of God's creation:

"He said to me, 'This water flows toward the eastern region and goes down into the Arabah; and when it enters the sea, the sea of stagnant waters, the water there will become fresh. Wherever the river goes, every living creature that swarms will live, and there will be very many fish, once these waters reach there. It will become fresh; and everything will live where the river goes. People will stand fishing beside the sea from En-gedi to En-eglaim; it will be a place for the spreading of nets; its fish will be of a great many kinds, like the fish of the Great Sea. But its swamps and marshes will not become fresh; they are to be left for salt. On the banks, on both sides of the river, there will grow all kinds of trees for food. Their leaves will not wither nor their fruit fail, but they will bear fresh fruit every month, because the water for them flows from the sanctuary. Their fruit will be for food, and their leaves for healing.'"

Endnote

1. Data obtained through the Barataria Terrebonne National Estuary 2009 Annual Report; National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration (NOAA CSC- 2009) Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (2008); and the National Academies of Science 2006.

See committee and General Assembly Action on this Item at
<http://www.pc-biz.org/Explorer.aspx?id=3109>