



Coastwide Nutria Control Program (LA-03b)

Project Status

Approved Date: 2002 **Project Area:** Coastwide
Approved Funds: \$68.8 M **Total Est. Cost:** \$68.8 M
Net Benefit After 20 Years: 14,963 acres
Status: Implementation
Project Type: Herbivory Control

Location

This project is located throughout the coastal zone of Louisiana. The program area includes all basins and coastal parishes located south of Interstates 10 and 12.

Problems

Fur trapping activity has been declining drastically for over 10 years because of weak market demand and low prices. In coastal Louisiana, this decline has resulted in overpopulation of nutria and serious damage to coastal wetlands from nutria herbivory. Annual aerial surveys from 1993 to 2001 have indicated that approximately 100,000 acres have been impacted coastwide.

Restoration Strategy

This project's objective is to significantly reduce the damage nutria herbivory causes to coastal wetlands.

The project will implement a nutria control program designed to remove about 400,000 nutria annually. The control program will consist of an incentive payment program to encourage nutria harvesting. The program will be implemented by the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries.

If the removal of 400,000 nutria annually can be sustained for 5 years, it is estimated that the acreage impacted by nutria would be reduced by 25-49%. In other words, after 5 years of sustained harvest, the total area of damage would be reduced by 25,000 to 49,000 acres.

In addition, in some coastal swamps nutria can completely eliminate cypress regeneration. Nutria control will help address this problem as well.



Mature nutria are very prolific, leading to a high population. With few natural predators and the present lack of trapping activities, their numbers have caused great damage to marshes because of overgrazing.



Presently, only a small number of nutria are harvested from marshes by trapping. Low demand for the products they yield (pelts and meat) have provided little incentive for trappers to pursue them for economic gain.

Progress to Date

This project was selected for Phase 1 (engineering and design) funding at the January 2002 Louisiana Coastal Wetlands Conservation and Restoration Task Force meeting. Phase 2 (implementation) approval was granted during the April 2002 Task Force meeting and began in November 2002 with the 2002-03 Louisiana trapping season. This project is on Priority Project List 11.

For more project information, please contact:



Federal Sponsor:
 Natural Resources Conservation Service
 Alexandria, LA
 (318) 473-7816



Local Sponsor:
 Louisiana Department of Natural Resources
 Baton Rouge, LA
 (225) 342-7308

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 Project Boundary



Map Produced By:
U.S. Department of the Interior
U.S. Geological Survey
National Wetlands Research Center
Coastal Restoration Field Station

Background Imagery:
Thematic Mapper Satellite Imagery 2000
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Gulf of Mexico

