Allan Ensminger
(337) 462-0762

February 26, 2006

Mr. Greg Grandy
Louisiana Department of Natural Resources
Coastal Engineering Division
P. O. Box 44027
Baton Rouge, LA 70804-4027

Dear Mr. Grandy,

This will serve as an official letter of request to consider several worthwhile coastal restoration projects to be funded with Coastal Impact Assistance Project money within a portion of the Pontchartrain Basin. All of these projects would be helpful to address past and future landloss issues in this area.

Extensive environmental degradation of the freshwater marshland and cypress/tupelo swamps of this basin has taken place following the construction and connection of the hydrology of the Mississippi River Gulf Outlet during the 1960's. Benefits of the major navigation channel was envisioned to provide deep water access to accommodate shipping as well as to expedite movement of a major portion of oil and gas infrastructure and products associated with offshore production. While the channel has accomplished some of these expectations it has also wrecked havoc with huge acreages of wetlands in this Basin.

A major freshwater introduction project was planned through the Bonnet Carre Spillway during the 1970's to counter adverse environmental impacts of the channel. The project was funded and progressed to the point of development of a Draft Environmental Impact Study. Misguided opposition to the project delayed the implementation of the facility and as a result, saltwater intrusion has destroyed thousands of acres of freshwater marsh and cypress swamps.

Private marsh management programs were developed with assistance from State and Federal natural resource agencies and some features of the plans were implemented as mitigation measures for other impacts. All of these efforts were conceived and installed with expectation that the approved Bonnet Carre project would be built. Instead of implementation of the obvious project to combat ongoing environmental damage caused by the MRGO, several local projects were installed with successful outcomes such as the Lake Pontchartrain shoreline protection east of the mouth of Bayou La Branche;

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construction of a low level weir at a break in the shoreline; and construction of three major mitigation structures to address saltwater intrusion into a portion of the La Branche Wetland area. Material failure of the mitigation structures due to saltwater corrosion allowed deterioration of the marshland and swamps dependent upon freshwater environments has continued.

Upstream freshwater introduction projects have been offered in the Louisiana Coastal Area Plan; however; even if implemented in a timely manner, these sites are minor in capacity and far removed from the major area of impact within the La Branche swamp. It is timely to revisit the proposed Bonnet Carre Spillway Freshwater Introduction Project and move forward with a meaningful introduction of Mississippi River water into the Pontchartrain Basin.

In addition to the freshwater introduction project at Bonnet Carre, continuation of the proven shoreline stabilization effort in St. Charles Parish should be ranked as a high priority program with CIAP funds! Encroachment of Lake Pontchartrain into the fragile marshland in the area between the east guide levee of Bonnet Carre and the levee system in Jefferson Parish is eminent! Several sites exist where less than three hundred feet of marshland separates the large open water within the marsh and Lake Pontchartrain. Unless this issue is addressed soon, Lake Pontchartrain will invade the wetlands all the way into the Interstate Ten Highway and the Canadian Northern Illinois Railroad.

The first Coastal Wetland Planning, Protection and Restoration Act project was constructed by use of dredged fill material out of Lake Pontchartrain. An additional marsh creation site is available east of the present site and could build on the success of the present project. Barrow sites within Lake Pontchartrain will fill with silt from management of the Bonnet Carre Spillway to introduce river water on a frequent bases.

Construction of two major saltwater barrier structures in the mouth of Bayou La Branche and the Parish Boundary Line Canal would prohibit inflow of saltwater from Lake Pontchartrain into the interior swamp and marsh and still allow for outflow of rainwater. This is a doable project and would not jeopardize the safety of the local communities. The St. Charles Parish Hurricane Protection Levee was relocated from an alignment adjacent to Lake Pontchartrain to a site near Highway 61 between Norco and Kenner Louisiana. Movement of the levee protection facility committed the wetlands between the levee and Lake Pontchartrain to a very precarious future due to the increased water salinity in the system. Loss of the cypress swamp adjacent to the I-10 and I-310 Highway Interchange has resulted due to saltwater invasion through the construction scar and will be very difficult to reverse and restore. These structures would go a long ways in preserving the remaining stand of cypress timber along Bayou La Branche and north of the St. Charles Parish Hurricane Protection Levee.

As a wetland consultant with extensive experience in managing coastal wetlands in Louisiana, I feel that the CIAP funds can be employed to correct many conditions of wetland impact that have been directly and indirectly caused by the oil and gas industry. Assistance in selecting and sponsoring projects within each designated coastal Parish will

be critical to assure that the best and most efficient restoration efforts are selected for funding.

I appreciate the opportunity to be allowed to advocate projects that could address some of the ongoing environmental impacts within the Lake Pontchartrain Basin.

Sincerely yours,

Allan B. Ensminger

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ABE/me

c.c. Mr. W. A. Monteleone Jr., St. Charles Land Syndicate
Mr. Earl Mathern, St. Charles Parish
Mr. Allen Bolotte, USDA-NRCS