

## Ovt 092

*On Making Resources Available Regarding Destruction and Loss of Coastal Wetlands—From the Presbytery of South Louisiana.*

**The Presbytery of South Louisiana, at its stated meeting on February 23, 2010, approved the following overture to the 219th General Assembly (2010) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), for its consideration:**

**The Presbytery of South Louisiana (PSL) respectfully overtures the 219th General Assembly (2010)**

**to direct the Environmental Ministries Office of the General Assembly Mission Council to make educational resources available concerning this coastal land loss; and**

**to direct Congregational Ministries Publishing to work in conjunction with PSL to develop curriculum on the implications of coastal wetlands loss for God’s creation and God’s community; and**

**to establish financial support for a theological wetlands education center in the PSL for Presbyterians of all ages to learn to be stewards of wetlands and pro-active in their repair; and**

**to direct the Committee on Mission Responsibility Through Investment (MRTI) to examine the role of corporations and institutions in the destruction of the wetlands and report back to the 220<sup>th</sup> General Assembly; and**

**to direct the Washington Office 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 the massive coastal loss has negative spiritual, cultural, environmental, and economic implications<sup>1</sup>,

1. A land mass equivalent to the size of the state of Delaware has been lost from the Louisiana coastline in the last 70 years due mainly to human-caused factors.

2. 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.

3. South Louisiana's natural resources, such as petroleum and seafood, are vital to our nation's economy.

4. Hurricanes are at their strongest when they make landfall and the wetlands of south Louisiana have historically served as a buffer zone that protected inland communities and estuaries from storm surge and strong winds.

5. An increasing amount of damage in terms of suffering and property loss is expected due to the disappearance of a buffer zone unless action is taken to restore the coast.

6. The 1990 General Assembly passed an overture, “Restoring Creation for Ecology and Justice,” that called for the Presbyterian Church (USA) to take stronger action on environmental matters.

7. 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, where it enters the Sea. When it empties into the Sea, the water there becomes fresh. Swarms of living creatures will live wherever the river flows. There will be large numbers of fish, because this water flows there and makes the salt water fresh; so where the river flows everything will live. Fishermen will stand along the shore; from En Gedi to En Eglaim there will be places for spreading nets. The fish will be of many kinds—like the fish of the Great Sea. But the swamps and marshes will not become fresh; they will be left for salt. Fruit trees of all kinds will grow on both banks of the river. Their leaves will not wither, nor will their fruit fail. Every month they will bear, because the water from the sanctuary flows to them. Their fruit will serve 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; National Academies of Science 2006.