North Lake Mechant Landbridge Restoration (TE-44)

Project Status
Approved Date: 2001  
Project Area: 7,571 acres  
Approved Funds: $35.2 M  
Total Est. Cost: $36.7 M  
Net Benefit After 20 Years: 604 acres

Status: Completed  
Project Type: Dredged Material/Marsh Creation and Vegetative Planting

Location
The project is located in the Terrebonne Basin, in Terrebonne Parish, Louisiana.

Problems
The project would protect and restore a critical landbridge barrier between the easily erodible fresh marshes north of Bayou De Cade and the higher saline environment of Lake Mechant. At the present shoreline erosion rate, the north Lake Mechant shore will soon fail to act as a barrier, allowing the hydrologic connection between Lake Mechant and the fresher marshes to the north.

In addition, erosion and deterioration along the banks of Raccourci Bayou are threatening to enlarge and straighten this winding tidal pass into a major conduit for water exchange. These changes will accelerate the loss of the remaining interior marshes, extend lake-like conditions, and increase salinities north to Bayou De Cade.

Should shoreline breaching and enlargement of tidal channels allow high tidal energy conditions to intrude into the project area, the organic interior marshes would likely experience increased loss rates.

Restoration Strategy
Dredged material from northern Lake Mechant will be used to create marsh. Smooth cordgrass (Spartina alterniflora) will also be planted along the shorelines of Lake Mechant, Goose Bay, and Lake Pagie. The project will also repair breaches formed by erosion and oilfield access canals which threaten the integrity of the landbridge.

Progress to Date
The Louisiana Department of Natural Resources has completed project engineering and design. The Louisiana Coastal Wetlands Conservation and Restoration Task Force granted construction approval of construction unit one on August 7, 2002, which included shoreline vegetation plantings and were installed in summer 2003. Approval of construction unit two was granted on October 2004, which includes dedicated dredging for marsh creation and several other bank stabilization measures. Problems surrounding the recently established public oyster seed grounds and several private oyster leases in Lake Mechant were resolved and construction of that unit was completed in late 2009. This project is on Priority Project List 10.

For more information, please contact:

Federal Sponsor:  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
Lafayette, LA  
(337) 291-3100

Local Sponsor:  
Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority  
Baton Rouge, LA  
(225) 342-4736

Aerial photo of the shoreline of Lake Mechant showing the narrow lake rim and deteriorating marsh to the north. Dredged material will be pumped into this broken marsh to create new marsh to maintain this land bridge.

Northern shoreline of Lake Mechant showing the saltmeadow cordgrass (Spartina patens) dominated marsh eroding behind a large stand of smooth cordgrass (Spartina alterniflora) left standing at the water’s edge.