

The Honorable James Mattis
United States Secretary of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301

The Honorable Wilbur Ross
United States Secretary of Commerce
1401 Constitution Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20230

May 22, 2017

Dear Secretary Mattis and Secretary Ross:

The undersigned hunting, fishing, conservation, and outdoor-industry organizations representing millions of American sportsmen and women are writing to encourage you to expedite the federal review and permitting process on a critical infrastructure project in coastal Louisiana, the Mid-Barataria Sediment Diversion.

Land loss in the Gulf of Mexico basin is a constant threat to vulnerable coastal communities, wetlands habitat, and critical fisheries. Diversions in the Mississippi River Delta have for decades been recognized as effective approaches to restoring and sustaining coastal infrastructure, reversing land loss, and improving the habitat for game species like largemouth bass, redfish, speckled trout, tarpon, teal, and gadwalls and commercially-vital fisheries such as crab, shrimp, menhaden and other species.

The Mid-Barataria Sediment Diversion project located south of New Orleans has a long history in coastal Louisiana, with the need for a diversion in this area dating back to the 1970's. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Army Corps) and the State of Louisiana recommended the Mid-Barataria Sediment Diversion project in the 2004 Louisiana Coastal Area (LCA) Ecosystem Restoration Study and the Water Resources Development Act of 2007 included authority for the project through the Louisiana Coastal Area Ecosystem Restoration Program. In 2012, the Mid-Barataria project was approved by the Louisiana state legislature as part of the Louisiana Coastal Master Plan, a comprehensive plan to restore Louisiana's wetlands, protect coastal communities and reverse the crippling subsidence and erosion that have been the primary cause of nearly 2000 square miles of Louisiana wetland loss in the last century. In April 2016, the Louisiana Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority signed an agreement with the Army Corps to guarantee review of the Mid-Barataria Sediment Diversion by the Army Corps within three years, with the state paying \$1.5 million to cover the additional cost of the expeditious review.

In March, the Army Corps announced a decision to delay the environmental permitting process for the Mid-Barataria Sediment Diversion project until October 2022, stating a determination on required permits for the project would not be made until this time. Delaying the construction of the Mid-Barataria Sediment Diversion would threaten the safety of coastal communities and make it much more difficult and expensive to sustain ecological diversity in a critically rich ecosystem. In accordance with President Trump's January 24 Executive Order prioritizing critical infrastructure projects and the April 2016 agreement between the Army Corps and the State of Louisiana, it is our hope that the Army Corps, under your leadership, will expedite rather than delay this vital coastal infrastructure project and identify a more reasonable timeline to review and complete the project.

Thank you for your consideration and attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

American Sportfishing Association
B.A.S.S. LLC
Bonefish & Tarpon Trust
Camp Fire Club of America
Catch-A-Dream Foundation
Center for Sportfishing Policy
Coastal Conservation Association
Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation
Dallas Safari Club
Delta Waterfowl
Ducks Unlimited
Fly Fishers International
Guy Harvey Ocean Foundation
Houston Safari Club
International Game Fish Association
Masters of Foxhounds Association
National Association of Forest Service Retirees
National Shooting Sports Foundation
National Wildlife Federation
Orion – The Hunter's Institute
Pheasants Forever
Professional Outfitters and Guides of America
Quail Forever
Quality Deer Management Association
Recreational Fishing Alliance
Safari Club International
Snook and Gamefish Foundation
Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership
The Billfish Foundation
Whitetails Unlimited
Wildlife Forever
Wildlife Management Institute
Wild Sheep Foundation