

IN REPLY REFER TO
INRD-12

19 May 1976

Honorable Moon Landrieu
Mayor of New Orleans
City Hall, Civic Center
New Orleans, Louisiana 70112

Dear Mayor Landrieu:

Thank you for your support of the Lake Pontchartrain, Louisiana, and Vicinity hurricane protection project as expressed in your letter of 19 April 1976. I assure you that we are doing everything in our power to expedite the completion of this vital project. At the same time, we are acutely aware of the dangers facing the lush environment of this area. We continue to work at reducing to an absolute minimum the local environmental damage attendant with so great an undertaking.

Your plan for governmental acquisition of certain unlevied wetlands is quite comprehensive. The role of the Corps of Engineers in such a program is governed by the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act of 1938, as amended. Under the Act's provisions, we may develop plans to offset damages to fish and wildlife attributable to this project. When these plans involve the acquisition of lands, these lands must be managed so that their increased production compensates for the project associated fish and wildlife damage. The value of the increased production must exceed or equal the acquisition cost plus the management cost. If those conditions can be met, the acquisition cost may be included in the project cost and shared—70 percent Federal, 30 percent non-Federal. The management of the lands would be a non-Federal responsibility. Specific congressional authorization is required for any such plan.

We are not optimistic that fulfilling the criteria outlined above is likely in the case of this project. Such specific fish and wildlife losses as are associated with the project are minor. In fact, the project impact on fish and wildlife will, we consider, be beneficial on balance. Greatly increasing the productivity of the wetlands proposed

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Honorable Moon Landrieu

for acquisition would be expensive if possible at all. The purchase of wetlands with no attendant increase in productivity would not compensate for any fish and wildlife losses and would not fulfill the referenced criteria.

We will study the possibilities of land acquisition and management in the areas involved. If a favorable arrangement can be developed, we will recommend an appropriate plan for implementation. As previously alluded to, that plan would require specific congressional authorization. *EJD* BARTON

You may be interested in contacting the US Department of the Interior with regard to their programs for preserving natural areas. If you have HARRING any further questions concerning this matter, please feel free to call CHATRY on me.

Sincerely yours,

I. A. HUBERT, JR.
IEC, CE
Acting District Engineer

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