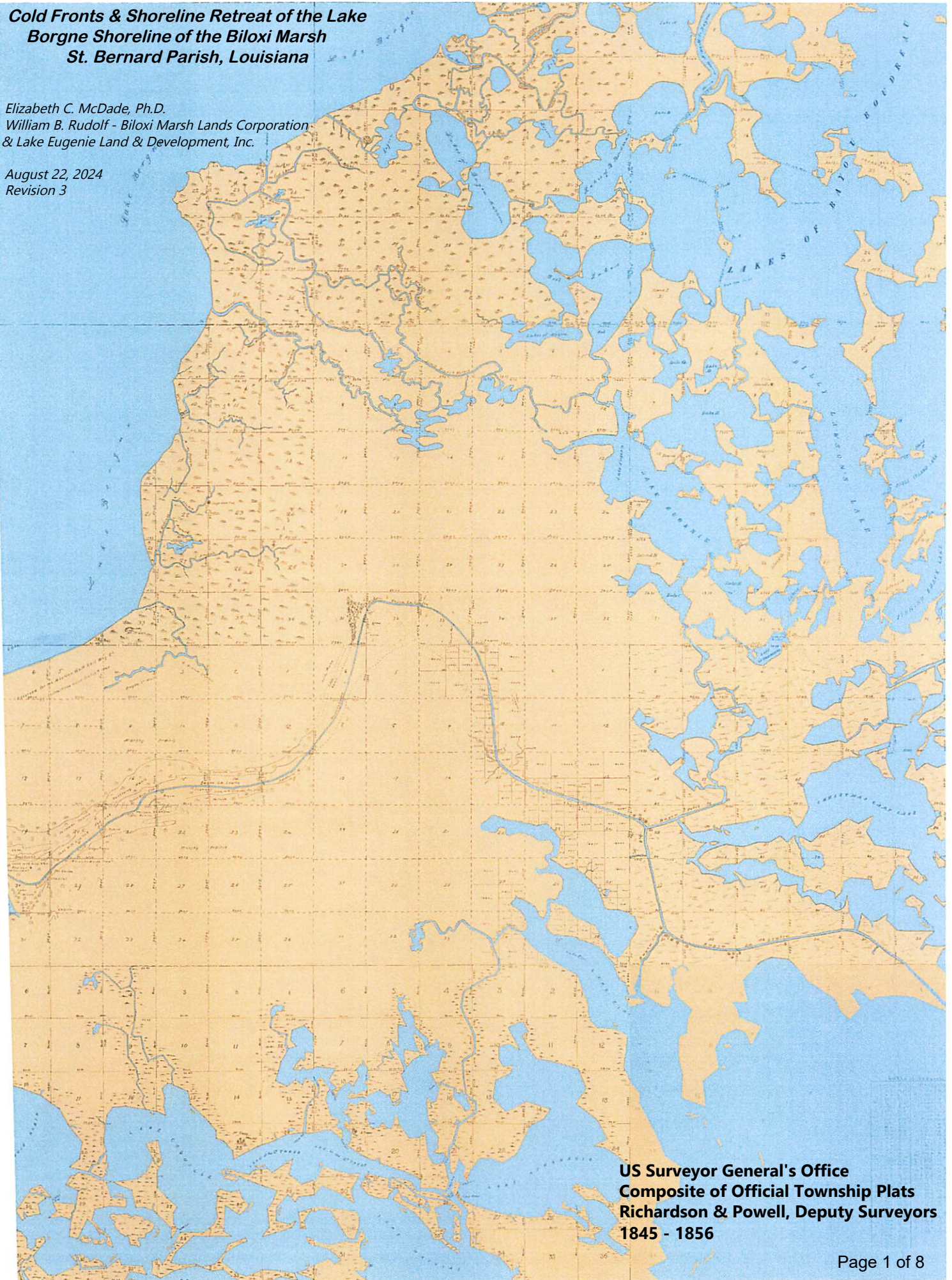


**Cold Fronts & Shoreline Retreat of the Lake  
Borgne Shoreline of the Biloxi Marsh  
St. Bernard Parish, Louisiana**

Elizabeth C. McDade, Ph.D.  
William B. Rudolf - Biloxi Marsh Lands Corporation  
& Lake Eugenie Land & Development, Inc.

August 22, 2024  
Revision 3



**US Surveyor General's Office  
Composite of Official Township Plats  
Richardson & Powell, Deputy Surveyors  
1845 - 1856**

## **Cold Fronts & Shoreline Retreat of the Lake Borgne Shoreline of the Biloxi Marsh St. Bernard Parish, Louisiana**

### **EFFECTS AND SOLUTIONS USING SHORE-PARALLEL ROCK DIKES**

Each year, the western Biloxi Marsh along Lake Borgne is losing a significant amount of marsh lands due to peripheral shoreline erosion as well as internal erosion (internal bayous, ponds and other interval waterways enlarging). **BOTTOM LINE:** The Biloxi Marsh is coming apart from the “outside in” and the “inside out”.<sup>1</sup> Armoring the Lake Borgne shoreline is a critical component of ensuring the long-term viability of the Biloxi Marsh that will in turn, ensure the long-term viability of other restoration projects in and around the Biloxi Marsh. Without immediate stabilization of the Lake Borgne shoreline, the Biloxi Marsh long-term existence is in jeopardy.<sup>2</sup>

**Predominant Causation:** The western Biloxi Marsh has approximately 15 miles of unprotected shoreline oriented in the north-south direction along Lake Borgne. The dramatic change in salinity and hydrology caused by construction and operation of the Mississippi River Gulf Outlet channel (MRGO, late 1950s-2009) accelerated shoreline retreat due to, including other detrimental effects of the MRGO to the ecosystem, the loss of protection provided by the natural *Rangia* clam shell berm.<sup>3</sup> This shoreline is battered relentlessly during multiple cold fronts every year, resulting in up to ~50 ft/yr of shoreline retreat and new hydrologic connections that break up the interior marsh.<sup>4</sup> Rock barriers in southern Lake Borgne, particularly CPRA PO-72, are a proven shoreline protection method that demonstrate the effectiveness of rocking the Lake Borgne shoreline.

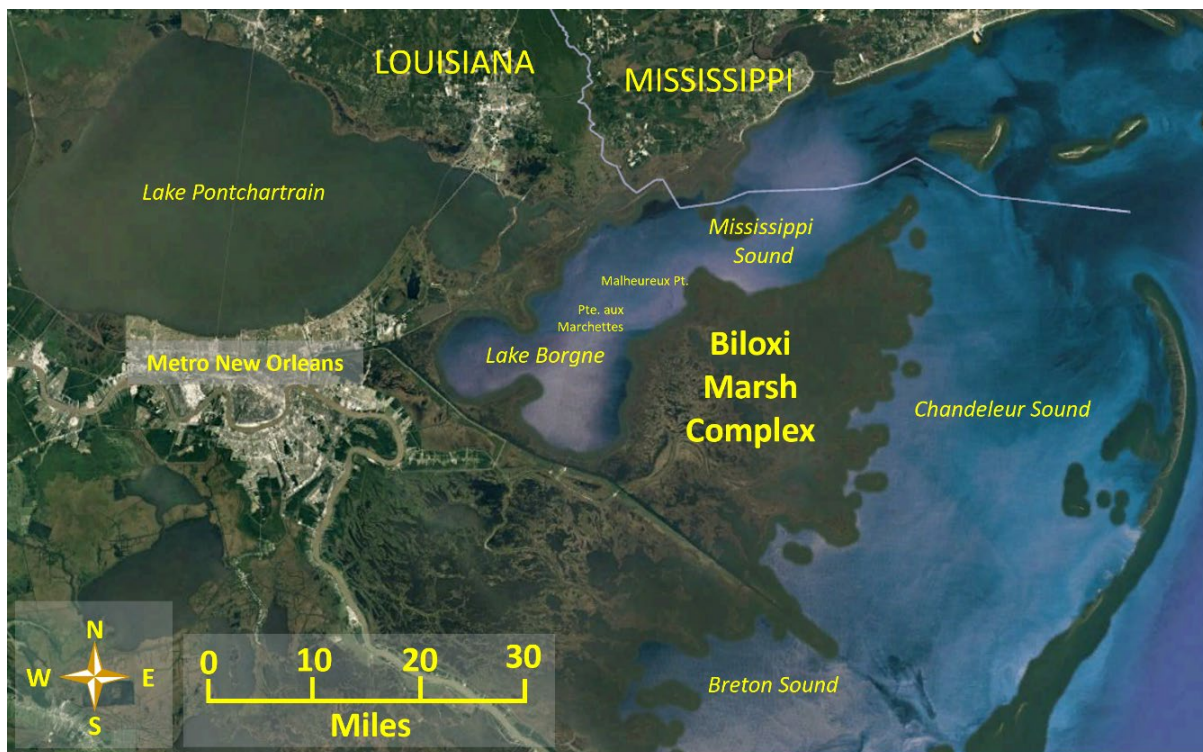


Figure 1: Biloxi Marsh is a 700 sq mile north-south peninsular land mass about 35 miles east of Metro New Orleans surrounded by water on four sides: Chandeleur, Breton, and Mississippi Sounds, and Lake Borgne.<sup>5</sup> It is an important storm buffer for the city of New Orleans because friction from the emergent marsh helps to attenuate and slow waves from occasional Atlantic season hurricanes and tropical storms.<sup>6</sup> Biloxi Marsh also provides major and essential low-brackish to salt-marsh habitat, fisheries, and oyster beds used for recreational and commercial purposes not only for Louisiana, but the entire mid-Gulf coast region.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Couvillion et al. 2016, Day et al. 2019, Lane et al. 2020, Kemp et al. 2021.

<sup>2</sup> Biloxi Marsh Lands Corp. 2006, 2017, 2019, Couvillion et al. 2016, Day et al. 2019, Lane et al. 2020, Kemp et al. 2021.

<sup>3</sup> Poirrier 2012, 2019, BLMC Comments to CPRA Master Plans 2017, 2019, Day et al. 2019, Lane et al. 2020, Kemp et al. 2021.

<sup>4</sup> CWPPRA PPL-33 Biloxi Marsh SP WVA 2023, Couvillion et al. 2016, Day et al. 2019, Lane et al. 2020, Kemp et al. 2021.

<sup>5</sup> Rudolf, W. B. (2017). Comments: DRAFT 2017 Coastal Master Plan.

<sup>6</sup> Deitrich et al. 2011, Resio and Westerink 2008, NOAA National Hurricane Center, Lopez 2006, 2009.

<sup>7</sup> Biloxi Wildlife Management Area <https://www.wlf.louisiana.gov/page/biloxi>

## BILOXI MARSH MAJOR LAND LOSS - Overview

1. Biloxi Marsh, a north-south oriented peninsula (~40 miles north to south; ~25 miles east to west) located in eastern St. Bernard Parish (Figure 1), suffers from significant peripheral erosion particularly along the western shore of the Biloxi Marsh with Lake Borgne,<sup>8</sup> and internal erosion within the marsh along tidally connected channels.<sup>9</sup>
2. The geographic position of the Biloxi Marsh as a north-south peninsula exposes its western shoreline with Lake Borgne to wind-driven wave and tidal action making this shoreline particularly susceptible to erosion and degradation from cold fronts.<sup>10</sup>
3. Cold fronts pass 30-40 times annually,<sup>11</sup> or about every 5 to 8 days mostly during the winter months and have a large cumulative effect on land loss in the Biloxi Marsh while tropical storm events affect the 100 only once every 5 years on average.<sup>12</sup>
4. The shoreline of the Biloxi Marsh along Lake Borgne is retreating at alarming rates from wave fetch erosion caused during numerous annual cold front passages. Accompanying each cold front passage there is also a phenomenon known as “coastal flushing”.<sup>13</sup> This “coastal flushing” phenomenon is the result of strong onshore winds (E-SE-S) prior to each frontal passage that blow water into the Biloxi Marsh (creating abnormally high-water conditions) followed by the passing of the cold front with a wind shift to strong offshore winds (W-NW-N-NE) (Figure 2A.).<sup>14</sup> The offshore winds blow the abnormally high water seaward out of the Biloxi Marsh, lowering water level in the marsh. This is “coastal flushing”. This rapid fall in the water levels causes internal marsh erosion (tidal scour) along bayous and pond edges that occurs with the abrupt evacuation of the pre-frontal passage high water.<sup>15</sup> Some cold fronts are associated with strong low pressure storm systems that increase land loss, exacerbating the foregoing erosional process by increasing the duration of the event and influencing water levels by variations in barometric pressure.<sup>16</sup>

### COLD FRONTS → COASTAL FLUSHING → SHORELINE RETREAT AND INTERIOR MARSH EROSION

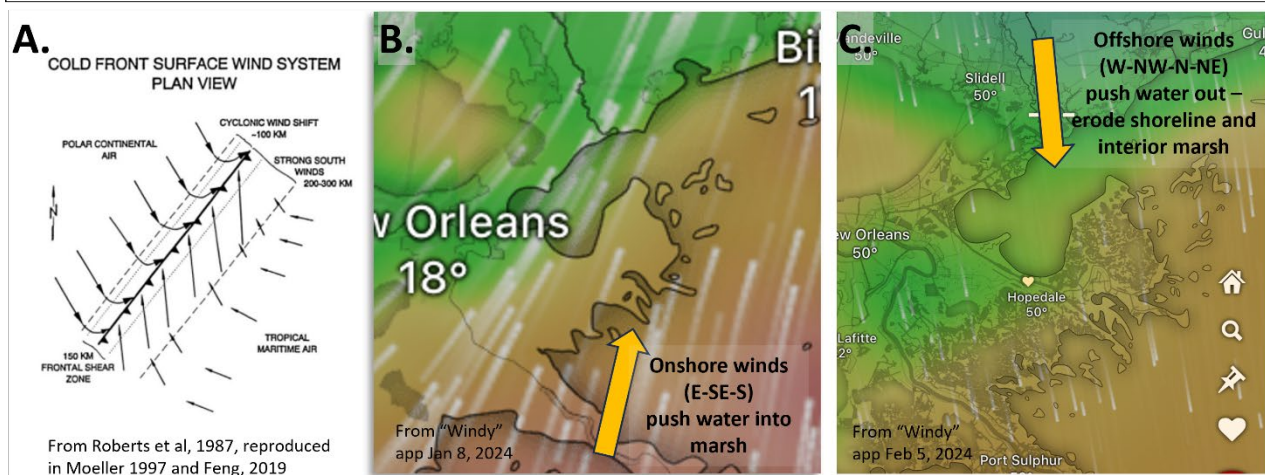


Figure 2: Cold fronts are a frequent winter month weather event in Louisiana. As a north-south oriented peninsula, the Biloxi Marsh is especially vulnerable to detrimental effects from cold fronts as they move across the marsh platform with large shifts in wind direction and barometric pressure (A.). Before the front passes (B.), onshore pre-frontal winds move water into the marsh, raising water level. After frontal passage (C.), offshore post-frontal winds move water out of the marsh, lowering water level and eroding the west-facing shoreline and interior channels, and depositing sediment landward.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Kemp et al, 2021, Day et al, 2019, Trosclair, 2013, CWPPRA PPL-33 Biloxi Marsh SP WVA 2023

<sup>9</sup> Couvillion et al. 2016, Day et al., 2019

<sup>10</sup> Trosclair 2013, Grout 2021, CWPPRA PPL-2023 WVA

<sup>11</sup> Roberts et al. 1987, Moeller et al, 1993, Feng 2009, Cao et al. 2020, Guo et al. 2020, Kim et al. 2020

<sup>12</sup> NOAA National Hurricane Center

<sup>13</sup> Roberts et al 1987, Mossa and Roberts 1990, Moeller et al 1993, Feng 2009, Feng and Li 2010, Li et al. 2011, Kim et al. 2020

<sup>14</sup> Roberts et al 1987, Mossa and Roberts 1990, Moeller et al 1993, Feng 2009, Feng and Li 2010, Li et al. 2011, Kim et al. 2020

<sup>15</sup> Roberts et al 1987, Mossa and Roberts 1990, Moeller et al 1993, Feng 2009, Feng and Li 2010, Li et al. 2011, Kim et al. 2020

<sup>16</sup> Trosclair 2013, Cao et al. 2020, Guo et al. 2020

<sup>17</sup> Roberts et al 1987, Mossa and Roberts 1990, Moeller et al 1993

## BILOXI MARSH MAJOR LAND LOSS - Overview - CONTINUED

5. In the pre-frontal phase before a cold front passes, onshore winds push water into the Biloxi Marsh for several days raising water levels in the marsh (Figure 2B.). Winds then shift to an offshore direction as the frontal shear zone passes (Figure 2C.). These post-frontal winds push water back seaward through the marsh, rapidly lowering water levels. Meanwhile, strong wind-driven waves batter the Lake Borgne shoreline during the post-frontal phase, causing peripheral erosion which in turn creates more openings that expose the internal marsh to increasing effects of internal tidal scour.<sup>18</sup>
6. Shoreline retreat accelerated by cold front passage is the reason that the primary land loss in the Biloxi Marsh occurs on the leeward side (western shoreline with Lake Borgne), not the windward (Chandeleur Sound shoreline).<sup>19</sup> Most coastal protection plans emphasize subsidence and marsh loss from tropical systems in decision-making process for projects, concerns that are less important in the Biloxi Marsh than the obvious peripheral erosion and its cascading detrimental effects along the Lake Borgne shoreline.<sup>20</sup> There is a clear need to recognize and manage the predictable land loss caused during the passage of multiple annual cold fronts. CWPPRA PO72 clearly demonstrates that shoreline and internal land loss can be stopped with shoreline protection.<sup>21</sup>

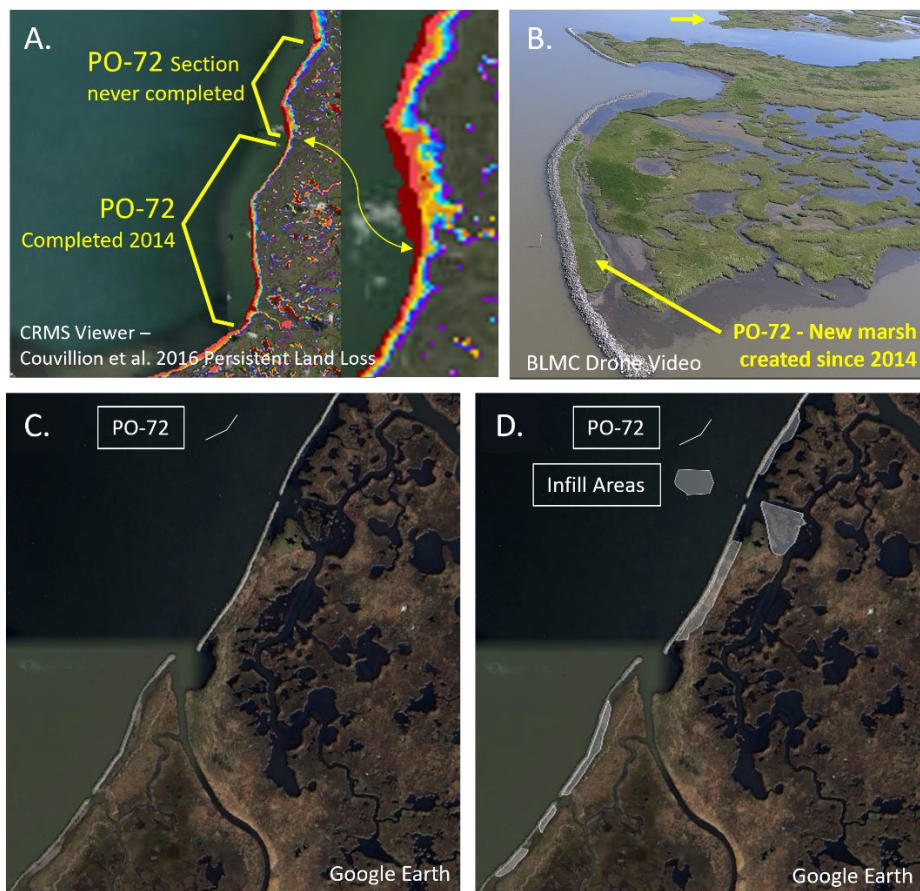


Figure 3: (A.) CPRA PO-72 was completed in 2014 without building to full project extent, but almost immediately had positive effect on the Biloxi Marsh shoreline where it was installed, arresting shoreline retreat and, (B.) building new land behind the barrier.<sup>22</sup> (C.) Sections of the Biloxi Marsh protected by rock barriers installed as CPRA PO-72 in 2014. (D.) New, healthy marsh quickly formed as “infill” behind the barriers, likely built on a substrate of sediment deposited during the post-frontal stage of cold fronts.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Day et al. 2019, Lane et al. 2020, Kemp et al. 2021, CWPPRA PPL-33 Biloxi Marsh SP WVA 2023

<sup>19</sup> Feng 2009, Feng and Li 2010, Li et al. 2011, Trosclair, 2013, Day et al, 2019, Lane et al. 2020, Kemp et al. 2021

<sup>20</sup> CPRA Master Plan 2012, 2017, BLMC Comments to CPRA Master Plans 2017, 2019, 2023, Byrnes et al. 2019, BMLC Comments to CPRA Master Plans 2017, 2019, Byrnes et al. 2019, Day et al. 2019, Lane et al. 2020, Kemp et al. 2021

<sup>21</sup> Day et al. 2019, Lane et al. 2020, Kemp et al. 2021, CWPPRA PPL-33 Biloxi Marsh SP WVA 2023

<sup>22</sup> Couvillion et al., 2016, CWPPRA PPL-33 Biloxi Marsh SP WVA 2023. Google Earth Pro historical images, Day et al. 2019, Lane et al 2020, Kemp 2021

<sup>23</sup> Roberts et al. 1987, Moeller et al. 1993, Feng 2009, Feng and Li 2010, Li et al. 2011

## BILOXI MARSH MAJOR LAND LOSS - Overview - CONTINUED

7. Originally designed, planned, permitted, and funded as a ~7-mile barrier (Figure 3A.),<sup>24</sup> CPRA PO-72 is ~4 miles of rock shoreline installed in 2014 along the southeast Lake Borgne shoreline from Jancke's Ditch to south of Bayou Grande. The barrier has worked very well to protect the shoreline from peripheral erosion from multiple cold fronts each year as designed,<sup>25</sup> clearly demonstrating the ability of rock barriers to stop shoreline retreat in eastern Lake Borgne.<sup>26</sup> As an extra benefit - new marsh has been created inland from the PO-72 (Figures 3B.to 3D.)<sup>27</sup> – most likely built on a substrate of lake bottom-derived sediment<sup>28</sup> carried into place by breaking waves during the post-frontal phase of the same cold fronts that erode unprotected Lake Borgne shoreline.<sup>29</sup>

An extension of this type of rock shoreline barrier is exactly what is needed to protect the additional ~15 miles of Biloxi Marsh shoreline from the end of PO-72 to at least the northern tip of Malheureux Pt. and can be expected to have similar positive results based on nearby project success in stopping shoreline retreat and providing protection for deposition of substrate that encourages new marsh growth inland from the rock barriers.

### Priority Projects to Protect & Stabilize the Biloxi Marsh

- **The Biloxi Marsh's orientation as a north-south peninsula with a west-facing shoreline, combined with peripheral erosion from cold front driven waves and inland coastal flushing as the main causes of land loss makes Biloxi Marsh a prime candidate for cost efficient armoring of the Lake Borge shoreline with a simple rock revetment.**<sup>30</sup>
- **Armoring the Lake Borgne shoreline from the current termination of CPRA PO-72 extending ~15 miles to at least, the northern tip of Malheureux Pt. is critical to save this important marine estuary and accompanying resources. We cannot over emphasize the need to implement this armoring as soon as possible.**<sup>31</sup>
- **Implementation of armoring the Biloxi Marsh shoreline is expected to greatly reduce shoreline retreat, thus reducing the openings between Lake Borgne and the interior marsh ("hydrologic connectivity"). This will prevent both peripheral and internal erosion.**<sup>32</sup>
- **In addition to stopping shoreline retreat and reducing hydrologic connectivity, shoreline armoring will capture lake-derived sediment forming a substrate for new marsh inland of the rock barrier.**<sup>33</sup>

<sup>24</sup> CPRA Biloxi Marsh Shoreline Design and As-Built Project Documents, CWPPRA PPL-33 Biloxi Marsh SP WVA 2023.

<sup>25</sup> Accardo 2022, PO-72 Annual Inspection Report, CWPPRA PPL-33 Final Project Proposals, CWPPRA PPL-33 Biloxi Marsh SP WVA 2023

<sup>26</sup> CWPPRA PPL-33 Biloxi Marsh SP WVA 2023, Google EarthPro Historical images,

<sup>27</sup> Google EarthPro Historical images, Couvillion 2016, Day et al. 2019, Lane et al. 2020, Kemp et al. 2021

<sup>28</sup> Day et al. 2019, Lane et al. 2020, Kemp et al. 2021, Couvillion et al. 2016

<sup>29</sup> Roberts et al. 1987, Moeller et al. 1993, Feng 2009, Feng and Li 2010, Li et al. 2011, Google Earth Pro historical images, Day et al. 2019, Lane et al. 2020, Kemp et al. 2021

<sup>30</sup> King et al 2006, Rudolf 2019, CWPPRA 2023 PPL-33 Biloxi Marsh SP WVA

<sup>31</sup> King et al 2006, CPRA Master Plan 2012, 2017, 2023, BLMC Comments to CPRA Master Plans 2017, 2019, 2023, Rudolf 2019, Day et al. 2019, Lane et al. 2020, Kemp et al. 2021

<sup>32</sup> Day et al. 2019, Lane et al. 2020, Kemp et al. 2021

<sup>33</sup> Google EarthPro Historical images, CWPPRA 2023 PPL-33 Biloxi Marsh SP WVA, Day et al. 2019, Lane et al. 2020, Kemp et al. 2021

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