



Statement by Elizabeth Skree
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Central Wetlands Assimilation Project Groundbreaking
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My name is Elizabeth Skree. I'm the Communications Manager for the Mississippi River Delta Restoration Project at Environmental Defense Fund.

The Central Wetlands Assimilation Project is a vital first step to showing that environmental restoration equals economic restoration, creating recreation opportunities, improving habitat and creating new jobs. Restoring the entire Central Wetlands Unit has the potential to [create 680 direct and indirect restoration related jobs](#), according to a study we released last year.

The Central Wetlands Assimilation Project is an important and innovative step towards restoring this important part of the New Orleans ecosystem. Restoring freshwater flows and taking maximum advantage of the resources available—as this project is doing—is a model for all of our coastal Louisiana restoration efforts.

Environmental Defense Fund has worked for many years in many different capacities to recreate a self-sustaining delta ecosystem in southern Louisiana. Working with our partners, we have focused particularly on the restoration of the Central Wetlands and the closure of the Mississippi River Gulf Outlet—also known as MRGO—because of the potential benefits that restored cypress and marsh can play in providing storm protection and natural ecosystem benefits for neighboring communities.

The people of New Orleans, the Lower Ninth Ward and St. Bernard Parish used to have a majestic cypress forest both as their backyard and as a buffer between them and Gulf hurricanes. MRGO destroyed that, but we have a chance to bring it back, and that is why this project is such an important priority.

We applaud the city of New Orleans, St. Bernard Parish, the Sewerage and Water Board, local and state officials for making this project a reality. We also commend our local and community partners and the non-governmental organization community for keeping the momentum alive for restoring this and other coastal Louisiana ecosystems.