



## ***MEDIA RELEASE***

March 28, 2006  
For Immediate Release

### **FOR MORE INFORMATION**

Chris Smith, Media Relations Coordinator  
(504) 884-4008

### **“OPEN OR CLOSED?” SIERRA CLUB FOCUSES ON MRGO AT TULANE ENVIRONMENTAL LAW PANEL**

**NEW ORLEANS** – One of the most controversial issues following the devastation of Katrina – the future of the Mississippi River Gulf Outlet – will be the focus of a panel discussion at Tulane University’s 11<sup>th</sup> Annual Environmental Law Conference.

“MRGO: Open or Closed?” will occur from 3:45 to 5:30 p.m., Saturday, April 1, at the Tulane University School of Law Building, in Uptown New Orleans.

The panel will feature legal and environmental experts who will discuss the impact of the Mississippi River Gulf Outlet on the delta and its relationship to flooding during Hurricane Katrina. The panel will examine the environmental and economical impacts of closing the outlet, as well as discuss the value of keeping the waterway open for business.

“The Mississippi River Gulf Outlet has become a major focal point following Katrina because many believe it promoted the storm surge that caused flooding,” explains Jerry Speir, the panel moderator. Speir has been an environmental activist in Louisiana for more than 20 years. He is a former director of the Tulane Institute for Environmental Law and Policy. In recent years, his research has focused on efforts to “re-invent”

environmental law and regulation. “The purpose of this presentation is to discuss the value of MRGO and to investigate whether it is wise to maintain it or close it down.”

The panelists are:

Pam Dashiell is a long-time community activist and is one of the founding members of Citizens Against Widening the Industrial Canal. She serves as president of the Holy Cross Neighborhood Association and has lived in that neighborhood for more than 15 years.

Carlton Dufrechou is executive director of the Lake Pontchartrain Basin Foundation, a membership-based citizens' organization dedicated to restoring and preserving the Lake Pontchartrain Basin. He also served as a planner and project manager with the New Orleans District of the Corps of Engineers where he participated in the planning, implementation and management of water resource, environmental restoration, and flood control projects throughout central and southern Louisiana.

David Flotte is a trial lawyer and partner with the firm of Courtenay, Hunter and Fontana of New Orleans. He is a litigator who has defended maritime companies for the past 21 years including environmental criminal prosecutions by the United States Justice Department.

The conference features numerous other presentations and panel discussion on a variety of environmental issues, including: Rebuilding and Repopulation in the Hit Zone; How the Animals Weathered the Storm; Levee Failure and Liability; and the Past, Present and Future of the Lake Maurepas and Manchac Swamps. The conference is open to the public; attendance is \$25 for the one-day event. For more information, visit <http://www.law.tulane.edu/enlaw/>

The Sierra Club – Delta Chapter (Louisiana) is a sponsor of the 11<sup>th</sup> Annual Environmental Law Conference. For more information about the local chapter of the Sierra Club, visit <http://www.louisiana.sierraclub.org/>

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The Sierra Club's 700,000 members work together to protect communities and the planet. The Club is America's oldest, largest and most influential grassroots environmental organization. The Delta (Louisiana) chapter of the Sierra Club has more than 3,500 members and has been active in local conservation projects for more than 30 years. For more information, contact the organization's website: [www.louisiana.sierraclub.org](http://www.louisiana.sierraclub.org).