

## OBAMA'S LOUISIANA VISIT HIGHLIGHTS SUSTAINABILITY ISSUES FOR LOUISIANA, SAYS STATE SIERRA CLUB

New Orleans - President Obama's visit to Louisiana and the Crescent City have put the spotlight on Louisiana and environmental sustainability, said the Delta Chapter of the Sierra Club. A central theme of the President's visit is the state's ongoing recovery from Hurricanes Katrina and Rita in 2005, along with Gustav and Ike last year. That theme is directly connected to efforts to restore Louisiana's endangered coast and the state's attitude toward climate change policy.

"The issues of hurricane recovery, coastal restoration, and sustainability are inextricably linked," said Haywood Martin, Chair of the Delta (Louisiana ) Chapter. "These issues are also tied to climate change and the role that Louisiana will play in the national effort to address that larger problem."

The Chapter noted that Louisiana is one of the states most vulnerable to sea-level rise, and faces a double impact from that trend, with a rising Gulf of Mexico and a subsiding coast. Louisiana is also vulnerable to other direct and indirect effects of a warming climate, such as extreme weather, flooding, and economic dislocations. Louisiana is also a major emitter of carbon and other greenhouse gases, primarily from its industrial sector. A recent study by Purdue University ranked Louisiana at the top of industrial carbon emitters. (1)

"On the positive side, Louisiana has seen extensive carbon sequestration projects, and increasing investment in energy efficiency, including recent utilization of federal stimulus dollars for that purpose," said Martin. "Utilities and other investors have supported reforestation projects, and there is an active effort to develop a coastal wetland sequestration program."

"On the negative side, Louisiana's political leadership continues to work against any national effort to control greenhouse gas emissions, from a cap and trade system to regulations, even as they trumpet the need to save the state's endangered coast," said Martin. The contradictions and risks in this political strategy were described in a recent Times-Picayune article. (2)

Another recent negative action was Governor Jindal's rejection of federal funds to restore passenger rail service between Baton Rouge and New Orleans, an action that would have set a major precedent for progressive transportation policy in Louisiana.

"Louisiana claims that its coastal crisis is a national problem that needs national support," said Martin, "but at the same time, some of its actions indicate that many of the state's political leaders do not take issues of sustainability seriously, to the degree that they understand them at all. A sustainable Louisiana requires a sustainable coast, but the reverse is true as well. And just as Louisiana needs national support to save its coast, the state's emissions are contributing to a climate problem that affects other states'

coastlines and quality of life. Acting as an obstructionist to national policies of sustainability doesn't seem a credible policy for Louisiana. Louisiana needs to be a part of the solution if it wants national help in solving its problems."

"The Delta Chapter urges President Obama to continue his efforts to develop a national climate policy and a diversified, sustainable energy system for America. The Delta Chapter urges our government and industry leadership in Louisiana to be part of the solution by taking action to work toward these same goals."

1. E. Bahr, City Business, "Study: Louisiana Tops in CO2 Emissions,"  
March 9, 2009.

<http://www.neworleanscitybusiness.com/viewStory.cfm?recID=32844>

2. J. Tilove, Times Picayune, "Coastal restoration and business  
interests conflict in halls of Congress," September 23, 2009.

[www.nola.com/politics/index.ssf/2009/09/coastal restoration and busine.html](http://www.nola.com/politics/index.ssf/2009/09/coastal_restoration_and_busine.html)

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