

# Maintaining Nature's Balance while Building for Man's Protection

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## Abstract

The need for hurricane protection in the metropolitan New Orleans area was proven decisively by Hurricane Betsy in September 1965. Eighteen Louisiana parishes were flooded by the tidal surge that accompanied Hurricane Betsy; 81 persons were left dead, and damages were estimated at about \$2 billion.

Prior to Betsy Congress had called for a study of the hurricane protection needs of the area, a study which was completed and in the process of being Congressionally authorized at the time of the disaster.

The plan of protection evolved by the New Orleans District of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, very briefly, consists of construction of a "barrier," designed to preclude the entrance of a hurricane-induced tidal surge into Lake Pontchartrain; the improvement of the levee system now protecting the area; and the construction of new levees and/or protective works where needed.

Concern that construction of the project might alter the ecology of Lake Pontchartrain and connecting waterways, adversely affecting the fish and oyster life of these waters, moved the Corps to undertake an extensive model study at the Waterways Experiment Station in Vicksburg, Mississippi.

Conclusions reached indicated that construction of the Lake Pontchartrain Hurricane Protection Project and the Mississippi River-Gulf Outlet would not materially affect the ecology of the Lake and connecting waters. Corps and cooperating Fish & Wildlife agencies further concluded that the locks at the junction of the canal and Lake Pontchartrain could be operated while still maintaining lake salinities at the most desirable level for fish interests. Accurate predictions of fresh water inflow into Lake Pontchartrain are needed to accomplish this.

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