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**STATEMENT BY:**

**R. KING MILLING, CHAIRMAN, AMERICA'S WETLAND FOUNDATION**

**On The Occasion of Introduction of: RESTORE THE GULF COAST ACT OF 2011**

Calling today's introduction of a bill to restore and sustain the Gulf of Mexico and its coast an historic moment in reviving a dying ecosystem, the America's WETLAND Foundation (AWF) lauded U.S. Senate leaders who unified around the legislation. "Rarely has the Gulf Coast come together as a region, even though our common challenges include the greatest continuous loss of land on the planet due to coastal erosion, subsidence and sea level rise," said King Milling, AWF Chairman.

The new legislation, introduced by Senator Mary Landrieu (D-LA), Senator David Vitter (R-LA), Senator Jim Sessions (R-AL) and six Gulf Coast Senatorial colleagues, marks a breakthrough in responding to the aftermath of the BP oil spill. "Our region bears the brunt of providing for secure domestic energy and a critical marine navigation system, while maintaining a healthy environment. When extraordinary events spoil our ecosystem, it is incumbent on the Nation to hold those responsible and ensure that the money is used to repair the damage," continued Milling.

"We long ago reached the point of no return," said Milling. "This vital strategic area that stabilizes the nation's economy in terms of energy, fisheries and river-borne commerce is in jeopardy and is not sustainable in its present condition. While the extent of this threat is lost on the average citizen, if action is not swift and effective to preserve the Mississippi Delta and its reaches, we will all feel it in the pocketbook for decades to come."

The new legislation ensures that monies from the BP oil spill fines quickly move into a process for coastal restoration to counter the growing environmental degradation of the region. "Passage of this important legislation will require broad bi-partisan support and can demonstrate our nation's commitment to the sustainability of this Gulf region, so critical to the entire country. Let's use this money now, before it is too late to ensure both an environmental and economic legacy for future generations. We call to action all interested to let their senators know what is at stake and the need to support this bill," Milling concluded.

A series of *Blue Ribbon Community Resiliency* leadership forums in the five U.S. Gulf States recently begun by the America's WETLAND Foundation confirms the urgent need for passage of the Gulf Coast Recovery Act of 2011. The forums empower Gulf communities to determine how to adapt to rapid changes along the coastline that jeopardize the sustainability of human and natural communities. A host of participants, including conservation and environmental organizations, industry and business, government, and community leaders, are calling for strategies and actions to shore up fragile coastal economic and environmental assets, the loss of which have national implications.

*The America's WETLAND Foundation manages the largest, most comprehensive public education campaign in Louisiana's history, raising public awareness of the impact of Louisiana's wetland loss on the state, nation and world. The America's Energy Coast initiative works to sustain the environmental and economic assets of the Gulf Coast region. The initiative is supported by a growing coalition of world, national and state conservation and environmental organizations and has drawn private support from businesses that see wetlands protection as a key to economic growth. For more information, visit [www.americaswetland.com](http://www.americaswetland.com) or [www.futureofthegulfcoast.org](http://www.futureofthegulfcoast.org).*